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MATTHEW DOYLE.

BY

Will Garland.

AUTHOR OF
"THE BROKEN LOCKET," "CONGRESS," ETC.

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MDCCCC.

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Matthew Doyle.

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TO

That solid class of American Citizens, North, South, East and West, who believe in, and work for, just laws by the legislature, speedy interpretation of them by the judiciary, and their fearless enforcement by the executive, this book is

DEDICATED.

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PUBLISHERS NOTICE.

Matthew Doyle will be universally read and commented upon. Coming as it does, from the pen of a Southerner who entertains forcible ideas on the prevailing evil of lynching, and who has the power to put those ideas in telling, at times burning, words, the novel will command the attention of all, and the support of that solid class of people to whom it is dedicated. As a story, Matthew Doyle is interesting from the start, and grows deeply fascinating as the simple plot is unfolded. The high ideals of disinterested friendship between rivals, unswerving fealty to duty at a tragic crisis, and the wages of lawlessness, and the reward of magnanimity are woven together with strands of love, laughter and pathos; and, at last, when we see the beautiful vision of a Yankee heroine and Dixie hero in future's dreamland, we cry, "Well done!"

The book is written with a true conception of the seriousness of the theme of Lynch Law, and it is not too much to prophesy that Matthew Doyle will leave as indelible an impress on the subject of the day, as did "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on slavery.

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MATTHEW DOYLE.

CHAPTER I.

"THEM BUTTER BALLS.

Mat Doyle was leaning over the fence, a busy person would say, in a lazy attitude, but in fact not. Mat Doyle was such a tall, angular fellow, and looked so loose in the joints—well, to catch at random for an illustration, he reminded me of one of these bicycles; just as long as he was in motion it was all right, but let him come to a stop and there had to be a house, or fence, or something of that sort about, else Mat, like the bicycle, would unceremoniously obey the law of gravitation. Yet this wasn't laziness or indolence; it wasn't from any desire to lay around, but simply, for one thing, Mat was none of your jump-at-a-fact-straddle-a-rule fellows; he was deliberative to a nicety, even pausing to give such a trivial and oft-recurring operation as batting his eyes due consideration before proceeding to bat, and hence, for another thing, when he paused in locomotion, he leaned—or reclined: and I'm sure that's a deal more Christian than flying in the face

of Providence, and saying: "See here, Mother Nature, you put me together, now attend to my standing alone."

So, on the occasion of which I am speaking, Mat was leaning over the fence. He held in the crook of his left arm an inverted straw hat, mostly straw, and very little hat; but what hat there was constituted, for the nonce, a receptacle for a quart or so of acorns. A fine old oak stood midway between the house and gate, and Mat, after work, and while he was waiting on supper, in acorn time, would come around from the horse lot and gather a hatful of acorns for his pigs.

It was a study in—what shall I call it?—say, suppressed speed, to watch Mat get his acorns. When he came well under the branches of the oak he would twirl his hat down, bottom side up, stoop over, and in a creeping fashion, such as Indians, and robbers, and bad men in dime novels assume, would circle around the hat, flipping in acorns, one, two, and three at a time, never missing an acorn, never missing the hat, and never missing a step. From the moment he threw in an armful of fodder for the mules' dessert, until he came to a halt at the fence, Mat never stopped. The fence reached, he would heave to with a contented "h-ehy," and begin calling, "soo, pig, soo-i, soo-i, soo-o-o pig." He always called, whether the pigs were there or not, although they generally managed to be there. They lounged around Uncle Alec McNeil's corner or Old Man Dodd's post-office pretty much all day in late summer, and when the afternoon train whistled they would start for home, arriving at the fence while their master was switching off for the acorns. Then began a squealing! To glance at them, only three fat little Poland China shoats, you wouldn't guess there was so much noise in them, but every time Mat threw in an

acorn they would squeal. I've often wondered why in the world Circé wanted to change her victims into swine: she is reported to have had a good many strings to her mythological bow, and when they were all so many lusty-lunged porkers bawling about her, it must have sounded worse than a session of Congress. I expect, though, the truth of the matter is, only hog-hobbiests, like Mat Doyle and Circé, have that afflatus to see more in a pig than mere breakfast bacon and lard.

When his pigs began saying grace, as Betty Doyle called it, Mat's fingers flew a trifle faster, until shortly the crown was brimfull; then he would wheel back on the main line for the fence.

Mat loved everything on the farm—poultry, cattle—all, with the minuteness of a penal statute, came in for a share of his affection. Even old Ball, who had been a gallant deer hound in his day, but who was now ending a sportsman's career after the orthodox sportsman-like fashion, *i. e.*, telling monstrous yarns to the young dogs and sniffing contemptuously at anything in the way of game brought on the place (but not refusing to eat the nestor's share, mind you), even old Ball received his daily kind word; but the pigs, "them butter balls," as Uncle Alec McNeil dubbed them, stood away up, first and foremost in Mat's big heart—of course, in that part of his heart devoted to dumb brutes.

Whenever Mother Doyle began to talk about the smoke-house and what it was going to contain for the coming winter, and otherwise steer uncomfortably close to "them butter balls," Mat would remark that middlin' was so cheap along now it would'nt pay a fellow to kill any for cold weather. One evening Mother Doyle joined him at the fence and exclaimed:

"My land! Matthew, won't they be powerful fat against Thanksgiving?" and he replied, "Yes'm, mother, but they'll be bigger'n that another year." And Mother Doyle, from whom her son inherited his big heart, made up her mind, then and there, that those pigs would live just as long as it was pleasing to Mat and the Lord. Moreover, she told Betty, on the quiet, that "Mat's darlings shouldn't be touched," and Betty, who thought her big brother was absolutely the best old Mat in creation, and who wasn't far wrong, either, but being, nevertheless, a bit of a tease, would ask him at table how the pigs were coming on, and then add to mother:

"Oh, won't the sausages be glorious next Christmas!" But Mother Doyle would tip her a wink to quit, and Betty, who was always too busy bringing in dishes and such like to sit down, would hug Mat and coddle him, company or no company. One evening, when Betty had poked some innocent jibe at him and buried it under a hug and a kiss, Mother Doyle said, a little quickly: "Never mind, Matthew, she just wants to practise up for Andy."

She intended the sally to help Mat out, who was slow at such things with the women folks, but she forgot, for the moment, that Andy Dodd's name sounded unpleasing to her son. The twitching of his lips as their smile swiftly faded, and the dropping of his eyes from Betty's face to his plate, reminded her, and she repented the words. However, I'm away off from the fence. There leaned Mat, chucking acorns down and murmuring, "soo, little fellows, soo-i," and he failed to notice Dud Trenome riding by. Dud almost passed Mat, too, without looking up. That would have been meat for talk, for the two young men were in plain sight of three neighbors' houses, to say nothing of Uncle Alec McNeil, who, everybody said, could see

right through his customer's pockets and tell how much money was there—and Uncle Alec was standing on his store porch some quarter down the street. Unfortunately for gossip, the two boys—once babymates, then schoolmates, and now grown-up-mates, and never yet an unfriendly or unkind word between them—spied each other at the same instant, the one through his engrossing pig feeding and the other through a spell of thinking.

"Feedin' 'em, are you," called Dud, giving his rein a pull to one side and coming to the fence.

"Yep—howdy, how are you—soo-i."

"Just so, so; how's all?"

"First rate—though mother's been a-workin' too hard." That was Mat's standing opinion—fancied, for Mother Doyle had to almost fight with him and Betty time and again to be allowed to bear ever so small a fraction of the domestic labor. Between you and me, if we fellows always fancied that same thing, we would'nt be hearing near so much about how run down our mothers look.

"Been over to town?" continued Mat.

"Yeh—first time I been in in nigh a week, but they had a meeting to-day."

"The directors?"

"Yeh—an' I might just as well a-stayed at home."

"Huh; 'd they go against you?—soo-i-pigs."

"Yeh—that's to be expected. Story owes Hicks for the lumber in his house, and 'course he votes with him."

"Huh, that ain't right—if it's so."

"Pshaw, Mat, everybody knows it's so; Story never paid a debt, 'cept to make a bigger one."

"He paid me for that cow."

"Oh, I didn't mean you, old boy, 'cause there ain't anybody 'round here that's goin' to try to beat you."

"That's 'cause mother's a widder."

"No 'taint—it's 'cause you're honest—and anybody knows if they try to beat you there ain't a jury in the county but what'll give you damages."

"Huh—we won't argue it, Dud."

"No; first thing I'd know you'd have it proved to me that you're worse'n Hicks just to carry your point."

Mat laughed at the compliment to his "lawyer's kink," which was the name Dud gave it down at Uncle Alec McNeil's one night. He said: "Gen'lemen, I'll be dad blamed if Mat Doyle can't argue a man right out of his boots; he's got a reg'lar lawyer's kink—though Mat's too honest to ever make a lawyer, I'm here to tell you."

"So they were too many for you?" asked Mat, referring to Dud's first words.

"Yeh; I'm glad my term's up against another fall. Talk about school director to me. Pshaw!"

"What they ben a-doin'?"

"Oh, you know we been hanging fire on the assistant up at the school. There was Annie Rose and Tilda Humphrey right here in Pike put in their bids. Annie lives little nighest my place, but I made up my mind I wasn't goin' to be partial. Annie or Tilda suited me. Well, a fellow from town come down here and bid in, and a little trick of a gal from town—she come down and bid. I didn't see her. I was aginst the fellow, 'cause I believe in giving the girls a show."

"Huh," dissented Mat, "that's why the boys can't make enough now to support a wife—the girls are takin' the jobs."

"Pshaw, Mat, you can't argue me down on that; I don't care what sort of proof you bring. Those old codgers—

Plato and all the rest, who've been dead two thousand years —can't ram any such stuff in my head."

"Now, Dud," began Mat, throwing down the last acorn and clapping his headgear on firmly; "you know women are taking the boys' work away from 'em right and left; look at every district school in forty miles——"

"That ain't it, Mat," broke in Dud, "that ain't it, at all. If you get started right you can beat any of us arguing, but you're way off the trail. I say, give the girls all such work as teaching schools that they want. What's teaching school for a big, strapping buck like you or me? You ain't heard of any girl takin' a plough-hand's job here lately, and you ain't likely to, but I know lots of boys right here in this county who have jumped up and quit farm work—gone on the railroad or into town—learned enough to gamble, get drunk, spend more'n their pay, and then get fired; and what do they do? Loaf around, hunting a set-down job and mouthin' about the girls bein' teachers, and clerks, and typewriters, and that kind of thing. There's enough open land in this state to support twice as many people as we've got: let those boys come back here and follow a plough like you and me, and I'll bet they can find plenty of gals to cook up what they raise."

"Dud, you agrue too close; yon want all the boys farming."

"No—nope—no, I don't, Mat. Get part of the boys farmin' and kep 'em at it, and there'll be enough surplus stuff raised for nearly all the rest to make up into something useful; and then the few that's left over—the runts —those who are kinder puny like, can ship it and sell it. The engines do all the pullin', anyhow; they'd just have to put it on the cars; and as for sellin' it and exchanging

it, it don't require a great sight of heavy labor to do that. If it's a good article, it sells itself, and if it ain't, fellows like Uncle Alec McNeil can sell it just the same."

The two friends laughed and Mat shifted the conversation back again.

"Well, about the assistant—did you get one?"

"Yeh—*they* did; *I* didn't have nothing to do with it. As I was tellin' you, there was four bids—Annie and Tilda and the man from town—Bryant, or some such name—and this little snip from town—her name's Hennon."

"You never saw her?"

"No; she came down and went back the same day—put in her bid with Hicks. The boys say she wasn't bigger'n a partridge,—but they voted her in."

"Huh; so she got it."

"Yeh; and she had the least bid of all. Annie and Tilda bid thirty dollars; the town fellow, thirty-five, and this Hennon gal knocked it down to twenty-five; and, gen'lemen, I'm here to tell you, when they commence knockin' down on as high a profession as teaching, it's time to quit."

"Huh," grunted Mat, "teaching's nothin'."

"Nothin'!" Dud exclaimed, and then solemnly: "Mat Doyle, do you and me want our children (they were both bachelors, and not even engaged) to be instructed by a person who values learnin' so little that they'll cut it down to twenty-five dollars?"

Mat's eyes twinkled as he drawled:

"Huh, Dud, teaching, and clerking, and typewriting ain't anything much."

Dud, laughing heartily at the trap he had fallen into, reached over and tapped Mat playfully with his whip, and replied: "I see I've got to give up somethin'; have it your

way, you old lawyer, but I stick to it, I don't believe in cuttin' down on a teacher's pay."

"Nobody makes 'em cut down, Dud."

"That's just what *I* hold, and when they come doin' it, I don't place much value on their ability to teach, do you?"

Mat changed his position a little, and pushed back his hat as he answered cautiously:

"Not as a general thing; but when a person's got to make his own living, especially a woman, in these hard times, it gets to be a purty shaving business; I tell you, want cuts mighty keen."

"'Course, 'course; true enough, Mat, but the boys all say this little school marm from town was dressed slick as you please; feathers, and ribbons, and what not, and I think if the wolf was gnawing through the door she could a-sorter halted him with her finery before throwin' a five-dollar bill at him."

"Yep, that's so, if 'twas like the boys say. Who'd you vote for—the highest bidder?"

"No-o; I told you Annie or Tilda, either one, was my candidates. That cuss who run it to thirty-five dollars—pshaw! I wouldn't a-voted for him if he'd a-offered to teach free. I didn't vote. I said, 'Gen'lemen, here's two Pike County girls, biddin' at thirty dollars apiece—needin' it bad; good girls, neighbors; I'm for either one—pick straws between 'em. If you're goin' out of Pike County to teach Pike County boys and girls, d—d if I'll vote!"

"Dudley," remonstrated Mat, "you didn't *cuss*, did you, and Deacon Hicks right there?"

"Yes, I did, Mat; made me so mad to see our home talent treated that way, I up and cussed, and I don't give

a—beg pardon, Mat—I don't care if Hicks does superintend the Sunday School."

Mat saw Dud was getting wrought up, so he returned to the salary question, easy like.

"But, Dud, I thought you believed in good pay."

"Why, don't I?"

"You didn't vote for the thirty-five-dollar bidder."

"Pshaw, he's a man, an' besides, thirty dollars'll support a teacher here handsomely! Thirty-five dollars! and him a man, and single! Gosh, he wanted a good thing, I reckon."

"Oh! I see," murmured Mat, innocently.

"'Course," Dud went on, thinking he had him. "When you look at it right, I knew you would. But I couldn't make *them* see it. They picked the town girl, and all over a paltry five-dollar note. I'd a-been willin' to give the county the difference."

Mat smiled at the varying magnitudes Dud gave to five dollars, enlarging and contracting it with the ease of a capitalist, or national banker.

"Hicks got mad over it, too," Dud pursued.

"Huh, something new, Hicks losing his temper."

"Well, he didn't exactly, as you might say, lose his temper. He thought I was votin' against the town marm 'cause she was from New Hampshire, when I didn't know she was from there till he said so. After I made my speech and told 'em I wouldn't go outside of Pike, Hicks said something about my not wanting Miss Hennon 'cause she was from up yonder. You know he bites and chews his words till you have to guess at half he says, but I heard 'Miss Hennon' an' 'New Hampshire,' and I said, 'I don't keer where she comes from—New Hampshire or New Zealand's all the same to me—the question is, we've

got merit in Pike County, and if we're goin' to go outside of Pike, what's the use of teaching the children at all? There bein' educated won't get 'em a job here, 'cause we'll have to be forever importin' our teachers and the like.

Mat opened his lips to say something, very probably argue the point with Dud, when Betty called from the porch that supper was ready, and then, recognizing Dud, she tripped down the front steps and came along the walk, fanning her flushed face for dear life with her apron.

"Hello, Betty," called Dud, while Mat turned his head towards her and put in:

"Come here, Betsy; I've got *four* pigs out here," pointing to Dud, who was leaning on the pommel of his saddle.

"Ha! that fourth must a-been lost in the range," Betty replied, and then to Dud:

"I don't know whether I ought to say hello to you or not; you're such a stranger."

"Well, you see, I been powerful busy."

"I say *busy!* Sparkin' all those purty girls back of your place."

"No, I ain't Betty, and if I knew you wasn't just fishing for a compliment, I'd tell you on which side of my place the purtiest girl lives," and Dud winked at Mat, who was very much tickled to see somebody tease Betty—he never could.

"Then what's kept you away?" asked Betty, coming to her brother's side and twisting his ear for laughing at Dud's banter.

"That last book Mat lent me; it's such a long one, and so interestin', I ain't laid it down hardly long enough to feed my stock or me."

"How do you like it?" queried Mat.

"First rate, though I didn't like the way that girl acted."

"Which book is it, Mat?" Betty asked.

"Ten Thousand a Year."

"Oh! Have you been reading that?" she exclaimed. "Well, I should say it *is* long; but it's fine, though. I read it—at least I read all about Kate and that Earl, or what-you-may-call-him—wasn't he grand? But I couldn't stand the rest; that Titmouse man—ugh! wasn't he a wretch?"

"What was wrong with the girl?" interposed Mat, who scented a struggle.

"Why, when she and her folks lost their home and that fellow Betty mentioned—the youngster who got beat for Parliament—when he wanted to help her and the rest she wouldn't have it. Now I hold that was wrong—plain foolishness."

"She couldn't accept aid from him," Mat remarked.

"Pshaw! Yes she could, if she hadn't been so proud. Pride don't mix with poverty worth a cuss."

"But you see, he loved her."

"So much the more reason for him helpin' her and her takin' it; what's love good for, anyhow, if it can't stand all sorts of weather; and what was the sense of lettin' her brother go to jail, and all of 'em livin' on suffrance, you might say, when that boy was just a-itching to help 'em out? If I'd a-been him, dog-goned if I wouldn't a-gone to a store and said: 'Here, you send those folks everything they need right along and charge to me."

"That's all right, Dud; but there's the principle of the thing you've got to look at."

"Principle be hanged! Mat, you're the beatenest fellow

about *principle.* Principle didn't pay their debts. Principle didn't——"

"But look here, Dud——" Mat was about to launch out, and, for aught we know, lug in all those codgers who, Dud said, had been cold for twenty centuries, but Betty broke up the impromptu debate. She wasn't much of a hand to either argue or listen to it. Her opinions wouldn't bear arguing; not that they were necessarily wrong, but she said she wasn't going to the trouble of forming notions and then be argued out of them; let people keep their views and she would do likewise. So, without ado, she said, throwing her arm around Mat's shoulder:

"Supper ain't goin' to wait on Ten Thousand A Year, and by the time you two have your hands washed I'll have Dud's horse 'round to the barn and feedin.'"

"Much obliged, Betty, but I come off and left my window up."

"Oh! who's goin' to steal anything from an old bachelor like you, and if they do it won't matter; maybe it'll teach you to get one of those girls back in the hills to come and keep house."

She came out of the gate as she spoke and stood by his pony's bridle, and continued. "Light and go in—my cookin' ain't a-goin' to hurt you."

Mother Doyle appeared on the porch at that moment. Betty and Mat not coming, she stepped out to see if the pigs had run off with them.

"Is that you, Dudley?" she called, shading her eyes. "Well, your plate's on the table, so you needn't be settin' up there like you just stopped to say howdy. 'Light and come in."

"There, now," said Betty.

"Um—huh," remarked Mat.

Dud slid down, as Mother Doyle's word was the end of the question, and Betty vaulted sideways into the saddle and cantered around up the lane. Dud came on through the gate, and while he and Mat advanced up the walk he called to Mother Doyle:

"I been out here half an hour, but Mat, he was too busy disputin' everything I said to ask me in."

"I wouldn't a-let him rode off, mother."

Mother Doyle laughed as she replied:

"I didn't know you had to be *asked* in our house, Dudley," and as the boys came up the steps she bent over and gave Dud's hand a kindly shake, at the same time taking both their hats and saying to Mat:

"The pigs?"

"Beautiful, mother, you ought to a-seen 'em this evening; they're fatter than they were yesterday."

Betty's bustling figure appeared in the hall. She had turned the pony over to a hand and hurried in, and she added to Mat's words, winking at Dud:

"Yes, ma, I never saw anything like it; Uncle Alec McNeil calls 'em butter balls, but I declare they look like sausage balls to me."

"Well, Dud," broke off Mat, suddenly losing all interest in pork or its concomitants, "let's go and wash up; Betty says supper beats time and tide at this ranch."

They turned in the large hall, at one end of which was a washstand, and while Mat was pouring a bowl for Dud, the latter called to Betty, who was now in the kitchen:

"Bet, how d'you like the pony?"

"Fine—when'd you get her?"

"Last week; she's only a colt."

"She's well broke; I'm going to get ma to buy her when she gets her growth."

As she said that she came rustling into the dining room with a big tray of biscuits and fried potatoes.

"I won't sell her, Bet—but tell you what I'll do: When you and Andy——"

Dud was looking mischievously at Mother Doyle, but she held her finger up so quickly that he paused abruptly and stepped over to the basin:

"You waitin' on me, Mat? Beg pardon—thought you were washing."

He plunged in, while Mat made no reply, but took the pitcher to the well. Mother Doyle seized the instant to approach Dud and whisper, while she unfolded the towel:

"Andy's drinkin' agin."

"Oh!" Dud exclaimed, softly, "Ill be careful, then," and he murmured, behind the suds: "Poor Betty, she ought to marry him or bounce him, one 'r the other."

Which constrains me to remark, that those alternatives are sometimes very like the proverbial forks of the road, where, whichever fork you take, you are shortly very sorry you took it.

CHAPTER II.

NECKTIES AND PRINCIPLE.

That night, after supper, Mat rode home with Dud. Mat never had been much of a ladies' man. When he wasn't working he generally betook himself to his little room and snugged away his leisure moments reading. He possessed an old arm chair, which had been brought up from the sitting room—a chair that must surely have been built for a contortionist, for Mat never could sit upright in it.

He would select a book out of his meagre but substantial collection, and flop into his big chair, one foot on the bedstead, window-sill, or stove, the other flung over an arm of the chair, head within whispering distance of the seat, and in that fix he would read until Betty called for meals, or the book run out, or the blood all dammed up in his cranium.

He often read on into twilight, and by so doing caused Mother Doyle to peep in and tell him how his grandpa ruined his sight that very way. But either Mat thought his eyes were much more dusk proof than his late grandfather's, or else he was too absorbed in his book. I have said before, Mat wasn't lazy, for he would give a little grunt, shift nearer the window, and continue reading.

So Mother Doyle and Betty were always glad when Mat took a little turn about, and that evening Mother Doyle was a bit more glad than usual.

Dud had told, at the table, all about the new school-

marm, and had said he thought she would report soon. In fact, the school opened very early in September, and that was the end of August.

This new schoolmarm set Mother Doyle thinking—thinking very vigorously along the line of domestic economy. She was an adept in that science: First, a novice from necessity; then growing into an artist, solving and resolving that puzzle of making both ends meet—and, what's more, keeping them there—and all the while finding she liked it "rael weel"; which we all do when we see the only way of getting round a thing is to tackle it square broadside—Dewcyize it, like.

This making both ends meet is a mighty close study, and, for that reason, domestic economy is entitled to be called an accurate science. In proof whereof, take more out of the larder than you put in, and it is no mathematical trick at all to figure how long or how short the larder will remain unmortgaged. Or, to drop into lecture-hall drone, take hold of this science in the concrete and treat it as a mere approximate problem, and it will speedily loom up in lurid light as an accurate affair, something that you can't handle as a weather signal, trusting to luck, wind and gullibility.

Mother Doyle had come abreast of it after her husband's death, when Mat was a youngster and Betty in arms. Widowhood, two helpless children, and a mortgaged farm on account of her husband's having uncorked too many jugs, were dark-visaged couriers of hard times, especially for a woman who had been reared in plenty. But hard times received a warm welcome. Mother Doyle tucked up her sleeves and went at them. She sold everything that was more ornamental than useful in the house; she managed with fewer hands; lastly, she disposed of the small library,

keeping only twelve or fifteen of the best books—for Mat, in childhood, showed his unfortunate father's predilection for reading.

In short, she was determined to make those troublesome ends meet, and make them meet she did. Hard times found no whining victim at her house, so they ambled on down to Uncle Alec McNeil's corner and were given a comfortable welcome among the whittling fraternity, who would be at a loss for something to do without hard times. On this, our early acquintance with the Doyles, the farm was free, they had two tenant families, Mat was a prize for work and steadiness, while Betty, grown to womanhood, was a gem for cellar and ground floor and garret. And the simple secret of it all was, Mother Doyle's faculty to make a few dollars and an iron will work in double harness. It was beautiful to see how they worked, bringing the Doyle affairs gradually around from bankruptcy to competency—plain and unfrilled competency, to be sure, but *independent* competency; and that word marks the only period where breath is worth the breathing. Just along here, as we have seen, comes Dud Trenome, and with his school-marm news sets Mother Doyle a-pondering.

"Betty," she began, after the table was set for the next morning and they were started on a piece of quilting:

"Betty, what did Dud say that new teacher's name was?"

"Hennon, wasn't it, ma—or something that way?"

"I believe it was. I was pouring the coffee when he mentioned it, but seems to me 'twas Hennon. I guess she'll come down to see about board soon as they notify her."

"Yes'm, I reckon so—don't reckon Dud'll meet her at the depot, do you, ma? Poor Dud, he said that finished him with school directin'."

"Well, of course, we all would have liked to seen one of Pike's girls get it, but they wouldn't bid low enough, and, you know, Betty, counties and states have to economize just as well as other folks."

"Yes'm."

"And twenty-five dollars will board the new teacher, and more besides."

"Why, ma, she can't get board for less than fifteen, and there's her washing, another dollar, at the very lowest, and I reckon she'd want to go into town once a month, anyhow, so there's another dollar for her ticket, both ways, and that only leaves her eight dollars."

"That's all true enough, Betty, *if* she has to pay fifteen for board.

"Land sakes, ma, you know there's only one place to go since Mrs. Dodd died, and that's Mrs. McNeil's, and she always charges that."

"Mrs. McNeil's ain't the only place, Betty; I don't care what it *has* been, but it ain't now. I'll board her for twelve and a half."

"You!"

This was a surprise to Betty. Mother Doyle calculated it would be, and she had decided to out with it abruptly, so that Betty could regain her balance, and then discuss the why and why not of the thing before Mat returned. The shock, however, seemed to have jarred Betty's small debative bump completely out of place. She sewed in silence, at a great rate for three or four minutes, and then looked up laughingly and said:

"Dud's getting to be a stranger as it is, ma, and if we board 'that bunch of feathers,' as he called her, we'd never see hair nor hide of him any more."

"Tut," replied Mother Doyle, "I know Dud of old. If

she's as fine-feathered as the boys told him, he'll be sparkin' her 'fore the next moon."

Betty sewed on for another short stretch, and presently ventured:

"I reckon Mrs. McNeil has already got her."

"I'll find that out to-morow, and if she hasn't, what do you think about us boardin' her?"

Mother Doyle was anxious to come to the merits of the case, for Betty was the one she wanted to gain over.

"It would just be more work on you, ma."

"Gracious, Betty, you and Mat let me do little enough, anyhow, except boss around."

Betty made no reply to this, and Mother Doyle returned to the charge with the main point: "You know, Betsy (she always called her Betsy at the persuasive stage), we agreed not to touch Mat's pigs, and that will pinch the smoke-house. If the cholera hadn't taken the sow and her litter, 'twould have been all right; but now it's those Poland Chinas or else we'll have to buy. If we get the school-marm at twelve and a half, cheap as that is, it'll buy our winter meat, save Mat's pigs, and not cramp us anywhere else about the place. You know Mat dotes on those pigs."

If Betty had entertained any misgivings as to the innovation of taking a boarder, she discarded them. She would have given up her best frock cheerfully for Mat's sake, and, that aside, wasn't she showing right along the devotion she bore him? I think so, for she held off with Andy Dodd because Mat showed in a quiet way—no blustering nor storming, mind you—not even a word of objection, but just by grim silence, that he didn't like Andy as a prospective brother-in-law, or, rather, as any but a sober brother-in-law. So Betty grounded her needle and came over to the new idea with a most encouraging vim to Mother Doyle.

"But, ma," she said, suddenly, while they were going over the details; "you mustn't go to workin' yourself down if we get her."

"Who, me? Why, child, before I was half as stout as I am now, I run this farm with you teething and Mat to patch for, and I'd rather patch for three men than a scamp the size Mat was then."

"I hope Mrs. McNeil hasn't got her," said Betty, recurring to that possibility.

"We'll find that out to-morrow, but I don't guess she has this soon. I doubt if she's heard of it."

"I'll be bound she knew it before they voted—that old woman is as bad for news as Uncle Alec McNeil is for stealing."

"Oh, oh! stealing's a hard word, didn't you know it?" remonstrated Betty's mother.

"Yes'm—but what else are you goin' to call it, charging way yonder on everything, and such as it is, too."

"Well, Betty, Uncle Alec McNeil has to live, you know, and if people don't like his prices they can trade somewhere's else."

"But those poor niggers who mortgage to him; they can't mortgage in town, and his is the only store out here where they can get supplied regular, and everybody knows how he grinds them. I call it worse than stealing."

Mother Doyle heaved a little sigh. She had thought of those things often, and in pretty much the same light as Betty, but she reproved her gently with: "Judge not, Betsy; judge not. Uncle Alec McNeil loves a dollar, it's true, but so do the folks who trade with him. I guess it's dog eat dog most of the time at his place."

Betty gave a sniff, signifying great contempt for Uncle

Alec McNeil and all his tribe, and, glancing at the clock, remarked:

"Mat's started home, I reckon. I'll fix him a bite. Say, ma, shall we tell him about the teacher to-night?"

"I guess we'd better. I don't want Mat to think we are keeping secrets from him—only we needn't tell him it's on account of the pigs."

"I think he ought to like the plan. The teacher's sure to be one of the reading kind, and that would tickle Mat."

"It might, if she was a man; but I'm afraid Mat will crawl into his shell like he always does when women are about."

"I'll make him crawl out if she boards with us. Goodness, ma! he's the only one of us who could keep her much interested, with his books and arguings; and if Mat's ever going to crawl out of his shell after women he'd better begin 'fore he's toothless. I declare, I hope the teacher will be the means of showing him that women folks ain't varmints."

The sound of Mat's horse going through the lane broke on their hearing, and Mother Doyle told Betty to throw the back door open so that Mat could see the light, meanwhile taking stitches vigorously, as though gathering force for some sort of an encounter.

"Well, are you back?" they both asked, as Mat came in and threw his hat on a chair.

"Yeh; Dud tried to persuade me to stay over night, but I knew you'd think the hobgoblins had run off with me."

"Did Dud get over his upset?" queried Betty, eyeing Mother Doyle.

"What? Oh! You mean about the teacher? No; he ain't reconciled to her yet; but he will be when he sees it's no use holding off."

"That's what I told Betty," joined in Mother Doyle. "S'I, Betty, mark my word, Dud'll be courtin' her if she's a right smart-looking girl."

"Huh! I don't know whether he'll get that far along. He says he ain't going about the school house. Says she can teach Hindoo up there for his part."

"Well," spoke Mother Doyle, dropping her sewing and facing around. "He can run up on her at other places—for instance, if she boards here."

"Here!"

Mat, for the moment, was as bereft of speech as Betty had been; then he sat down and made a silent onslaught on some cold chicken.

"Yes," said Mother Doyle, following up surprise number two.

"Betty and I were talkin' it over, and I believe all three of us will like it if she boards with us. Of course, we don't know anything about her, but if we ever do, we'll have to find it out ourselves. You both know I never was much on what people say of each other. I've seen folks with shining reputations who were very lame creatures at bottom. If she boards with us, and we don't like her, we can mighty soon tell her so, and if she don't like us, there won't be any offense in her going elsewhere. Betty and I would both enjoy her company; we ain't so awful bad to get along with, and I don't guess she'll be, and bein' a teacher, Mat, and no doubt up on books, you and she ought to do splendidly."

"Huh, I 'spect I'd be too countrified for her; you know she's a city girl, mother."

"Tut, town folks may get the news a little quicker'n you, but you ain't behind them on learnin'."

Mat ate on in silence. As I have hinted, he wasn't a

great hand at arguing with the women. When he agreed with them he simply said "Huh, that's so," or something of the kind. When he disagreed, he shut his mouth, or changed the subject; not because he thought a woman's opinion wasn't worth discussion; he venerated any stand they took on any question, and if he couldn't side with them he would explain afterwards, that, though a woman mightn't be able to bring out her proposition in logical sequence, yet she had such a keen sense of guessing, that all you had to do would be to wait and time would prove her right. Then he would point to instances where Mother Doyle had jumped clean across majors and minors to conclusions, and when the thing had reached its terminus, worked itself straight, behold her theory was a fact.

"Just let a woman's *because* alone and it'll do the arguing," was Mat's quaint but sterling reason for holding his peace.

When Mother Doyle had presented her case, so to speak, Mat was employed on the chicken, and, not being able to close his mouth for any length of time, and giving no Indian-like grunt of assent, both Betty and her ma were, for some minutes, in suspense. At last Mat tilted his chair back and contentedly drew the napkin across his lips. Betty removed the things to the kitchen, which was separated from the dining room by a width of porch. This was Mother Doyle's chance, and while you and I know she used the following words diplomatically, still, for my part, I am glad there are brothers and sisters whose love for one another is susceptible to this sort of strategy. Would you mind their increasing as manifold as Abraham's progeny? Even so, there would be no fear of them making the earth bulge out uncomfortably.

Mother Doyle said, keeping an eye and an ear both toward

the kitchen: "I know Betty would like to have the teacher board with us; it wouldn't be nigh so lonely for her."

Mat's eyes kindled with a kindly light, but he picked his teeth and remained mute. The thought of a strange female in the house caused him to draw in faster than a terrapin. He was, on occasions, shy enough with his own folks, especially when Betty began to tease him, and now this brand new idea for the Doyles of taking a boarder—a lady boarder—a young lady boarder—a school teacher fresh from the city, befeathered and beribboned, if the boys were to be believed—it obfuscated him.

All the words in all the dictionaries rose up before him and reeled and staggered in such a drunken dance that he could not put any two or more of them together, so he worked away with his toothpick and thought about cyclone pits, and wells, and other holes in the ground in which he could hide.

"Of course, we don't know whether she'd board here; she may have already engaged board at McNeil's," remarked Mother Doyle.

That was some hope, indeed, as he saw its likelihood, quite cheering. He hated to have Betty disappointed, and wouldn't have brooked the thought on any other question; he mentally vowed he would sell his pigs and buy her a beautiful dress for the loss of the teacher, but, poor Mat, he could not help hoping that the school marm had engaged her domicile. One thing unquestioned—if the McNeils wanted her, he knew it would take a mighty early bird to precede them—one of those birds that don't go to bed of nights. But Mother Doyle jarred his hopes completely awry by adding: "I'll know to-morrow morning whether the McNeils have her, and if they haven't, I'll write her. In fact, I'll just write to-night, and see Mrs. McNeil

soon, and if the teacher ain't promised them, I'll be in time to send the letter off on the morning train. Mat, get out the paper and things and I'll just write—or you do it for me, you're such a better hand than me at writing."

It had passed the discussive stage now; had arrived at the point of "do," and Mat arose and brought out the writing tools.

He would have had little or nothing to say at most, but since it had gone beyond the need of saying anything, he obeyed cheerfully, as he had always done from babyhood.

As he pushed the tablecloth partly aside and drew a chair he felt as though he was about to write his execution.

"I'm ready, mother."

"Well, lessee now—put her name down and then I'll have it begun."

"Here it is: Miss Laura Hennon—I guess she spells it that way."

"Ill get her address from Hicks. She made her bid through him, so I s'pose he knows it, and then she'll get it, whether it's spelt right or not. How'd you know her first name, Mat?"

"She left some cards with her name on 'em, and Hicks give Dud one."

"All right. You've got her name down, now, what else?"

Mat smiled as he thought, "if mother wants me to make it up I'd say, 'Miss Laura Hennon, please don't board at our house, yours truly,'" but he said aloud.

"Anything 'll do, mother; just say if she hasn't decided to board anywhere else, you would be glad to have her, and tell her the price."

"That's it; put it down that way, and when you come to the price say twelve dollars and a half."

"For the whole thing?"

"Yes, but that don't include washing."

Mat pegged away for a few minutes and then read:

"'Miss Laura Hennon: If you have not made other arrangements, I would be pleased to offer you board and lodging here at twelve dollars and a half per month.' How's that?"

"That'll do splendid."

"I'll put a stamp inside and leave the envelope blank; you can address it in the morning and put a stamp on, if the McNeils haven't secured her." He put it interrogatively, and Mother Doyle answered:

"No, I wouldn't try to take her away from them, but I certainly hope she ain't gone there yet."

Mat was too busy folding the letter to express any hope, though I doubt not he, too, had hopes on the subject. Betty had entered meanwhile, and stood watching her brother, and, from the twinkle of her eye, she enjoyed it immensely.

"Say, Mat," she exclaimed, after the reading, "you ought to have told her there was a nice, handsome feller here and then she'd come."

"Huh!" and Mat shuddered.

"Well, ain't you handsome?" she asked, coming around the table and hugging him.

"I don't know, Betsy; there ain't any looking-glass in my room, and you're always usin' yours."

"Oh, you story!" she cried, giving him a pat.

"Ain't it so, mother?' he asked, appealing to Mother Doyle.

"Well, Matthew, I hear some mighty heavy footsteps in there sometimes."

Betty clapped her hands as this point was scored, and

laughed and rumpled his hair dreadfully, but Mat protested:

"Oh, now, mother! only on Sundays, and then just to fix my necktie."

"I'll bet he'll be wearin' 'em every day if the teacher comes," said Betty at the mention of ties.

"Huh! No I won't; it'd take more'n a school teacher to make me break a principle." (And Mat was one of those men with whom principle is principle, whether it concerns neckties or salvation).

CHAPTER III.

"M'NEIL" AND "DEAR."

Uncle Alec McNeil was down in his store after breakfast dusting off the show cases, rearranging things, and fussing around generally. There was nothing about Uncle Alec McNeil's exterior to excite wonder, or, for the matter of that, a second glance in a crowd. He was, perhaps, five foot eight, or nine, at most; somewhat stout; or, more precisely, flabby, there being beneath his eyelids, especially, a puffed-out, vein-swollen apperance that denoted divers trips to the bottle. His moustache was a common enough looking article of its kind—a gray-brindle, unkempt daub, with stringy ends that flickered between drooping and dropping, as though having ceased the struggle to maintain a cavalry twirl. His hair was similar to that of a great many other old gentlemen who have passed through one war and considerably more than one bar-room to sixty-odd years—being very sparse around the outposts and quite absent on top.

His eyes, like his hair, followed the color of his moustache, for the sake of harmony, I suppose; but while the two latter seemed to be running to bare ground, the former took to water. His eyelashes—were not there to describe, and possibly that is why the orbs they once protected wept in unceasing driblets because they came not back.

His pose, or carriage, or whatever you choose to call it, was a trifle more shuffling than erect, and his head was

always tilted to the east by southeast. That may have been an adoption for facility, enabling him to look up at a tall customer or down at a small one with a simple shift of glance, or it may have been—and I am inclined to think it was—on account of sentiment. One of those fellows who is forever writing deep things on shallow subjects says that a hat worn on the side is a sign of sentiment: much more, then, would the wearing of the head that way be a proof, and, besides, Uncle Alec McNeil was intensely sentimental, as he frequently averred, over the scales.

His hands appeared to have foresworn water, whether to be in amity with his appetite, or because they thought his eyes dabbled enough in that limpid stock to do for the rest of him, I can't tell, but am open to conviction on the latter theory. His dress—we will not stop there, for it isn't the clothes that make the man, and I never agreed with Disraeli that a slovenly dressed person is a coward, in spite of himself. I believe those fellows who write and talk about them instead of going and telling them so, are the cowards. Uncle Alec McNeil was no less of a Beau Brummel than you, perhaps, and no more of a slouch than I, albeit his shirt front was a standing advertisement for the brand of tobacco he chewed. In that feature, however, his moustache was the star display board, for you could always tell by it what he had last eaten, if you came upon him between meals, before he had time to apply another layer.

The queerest thing connected with him was that everybody in Pike—not only the village of Pike, but the county—called him Uncle Alec McNeil. It wasn't Uncle Alec, or Uncle McNeil; it was invariably the whole thing, whether to strangers, friends or himself. Though he was like a multitude of old codgers in his personal appearance, and though his traits were scattered singly, and doubly, and

trebly throughout the family of Adam, yet no individual scion of that house possessed as many or was such a master of them as he; consequently there was, and properly could be, only one Uncle Alec McNeil. For McNeils the world may never want; for Alec's drought nor overflow can endanger them; and for uncles, go down by the seaside and count the sands; but combine the three into one Uncle Alec McNeil, and Pike, seat of the County of Pike, jurisdiction of Judge Lynch, was, during the tale I tell, the only spot beneath the stars whereat he resided, be now his habitation where it pleases.

Another characteristic was his voice: I mean his conversing voice; for he was no song bird. In pitch it was, say, a scale higher than tenor; in modulation, a gentle, sighing cadence, suggestive of a dying dove calling farewell to its mate. The forte, when he was in gin and "ginger," was much stronger than usual, as though a dozen or more doves were about to discard pin feathers for pinions. But strong or soft, Uncle Alec McNeil never talked, spoke, or conversed—he sighed, wheedled, or moaned, as though he existed not because life was worth a penny to him, but for the pecuniary advancement of his customers. And I expect that was really why he continued to live; at least, he said so, in substance, hundreds of times, and whether or not he was a creditable witness. I will return to the channel of my story, and leave you to judge.

"Good morning, Mrs. Doyle," he sighed, as the widow entered.

"Howdy, Uncle Alec McNeil—all well?"

"Tollable, to-day; though I was down with a chill yesterday."

"That's too bad; very hard one?"

"Oh! worst in the world, mum—one of those shakers;

I declare, they come on me—um—yes, mum, was there something I can do for you this morning?"

"Thought I'd bring a little butter down; what's butter worth now?"

"A bit."

"A bit!"

"Why, Lord, mum, this warm weather holds on so, butter just melts on my hands—dead loss; ah, hey, dead loss; yes, mum; but then I take it for accommodation to my customers. There's no call here for it at all, and I can't get —well, the market in town is just overrun—how much have you?"

"I brought four pounds, but I'll take it back; a bit's so little——"

Uncle Alec McNeil looked furtively toward the door and then said, in a breath:

"Well, mum, I'll make it fifteen; but only to you; lemme tell you what's a fact: I've got butter back there that won't bring a dime to the pound; why, I just tell you; the market in town is, is—yes, mum; now what did you want?" He removed the butter to his shelf and Mother Doyle looked at a slip of paper and said: "Some sugar—how do you sell it?"

"Six and a half."

"My! Is it like the last I got from you!"

"No, mum, this is a much finer grade—cost me five cents at New Orleans; they make it down there from the finest—yes, mum; how much?"

"Let me see some of it, first."

"Certainly; just come on back—here it is."

He dived down in a barrel and brought up a scoopful, which Mother Doyle inspected.

"This sugar's got trash in it like the other."

"Why, mum, you see I've purty nigh run out o' this, and when it gets down to the bottom, continually knockin' ag'inst the barrel and all that, you see, a little of the lint off the wood and dust, too, flyin' around, gets in: now that other sugar was trashy all the way through—cheaper grade, you know—but this sugar's fine sugar, yes, mum; there's just about ten pounds left, and you can have it all at six cents; the last of the barrel, and I won't hurt nobody but myself knockin' off the half-cent; cost me five and three-quarters laid down, yes, mum; you just take it at six an'——"

"No; I only want two bits' worth."

He brought a paper sack, and adjusting a pair of scales nearby, weighed out the amount, Mother Doyle keeping at his elbow meanwhile. When he had placed the package in her basket, she finished trading out the price of the butter, and asked if Mrs. McNeil was home; the house stood some thirty yards from the store. "Yes, mum; just come back through here and go around the yard; I expect you'll find her and Winnie in the kitchen; leave your things here and I'll put them behind the counter." Mother Doyle hesitated slightly, and then left the basket and went through the back door, murmuring as she crossed the yard: "He trades close, but I don't believe he steals." Uncle Alec McNeil passed slantingly by the open door and saw her enter the house. Then he brought the scoop from the sugar barrel and returned behind the counter, and before Mother Doyle had said much more than "Howdy" to his wife and daughter, there were several ounces of sugar missing from her basket, which she would, in time, charge to the mice—for she was a first-rate guesser at about how long two bits' of sugar ought to last.

Uncle Alec McNeil next turned his attention to the

recently bought butter, and, taking a butcher knife, which he wiped on his sleeve, he cut from the bottom of each pound a slice of a dime's thickness, and laid them away behind the counter. His maneuvres were amazingly quick for an old fellow, showing the despatch that is only acquired by practise, and I have this to say: he was decidedly too near the time when the great invoice would be taken of his comings and shortcomings to be up to any such tricks. Meantime, Mother Doyle was chatting with the remaining members of the McNeil household and was slowly working the conversation around to school talk. With Winnie to deal, it would have been an easy enough matter, for Winnie was yet a school girl, and Mother Doyle could have put some first century (B. C.) question to her as to how she relished returning to her desk; but with Mrs. McNeil the task was not only slow, but herculean. On a simple salutation of "Howdy," Mrs. McNeil could talk for hours; not quarters, nor half-hours, but full, sixty-minute hours. She could work on it and enlarge it, as though she really thought people used that form of greeting to find out her health status, and as she always had, or expected to have, every disease "except housemaid's knee"—as Jerome says—I could have used days with more exactitude than hours. Mrs. McNeil was a large woman, with a lung capacity for three dozen drummers, and when she opened up on a subject her listeners—listened. Sleep was impossible for the noise she felt bound to employ, and, besides, one could always keep awake with the expectation of amusement, for whatever her theme, as she entered full upon it, she waxed wroth, though it would have led ordinary minds into realms of peace and quiet. Nor did the subject necessarily need be of moment. She could put anything, or merely nothnig, between her teeth and draw talk untold therefrom, and,

hence, I employed the terms "ordinary minds" just now because it requires attributes bordering on the supernatural to adduce something from nothing.

"Yes," began Mrs. McNeil, in reply to Mother Doyle's observation on the dry spell: "I never saw the like, and so many people taken down on account of it. McNeil keeps worried to death about me, and tells me not to overheat myself; but shucks! there's work got to be done, and that you well know, Mrs. Doyle, and what else can us housekeepers do but drudge, and drudge, and drudge. McNeil wants me to hire help, but one's work ain't half done unless you see to it yourself; and if I have to stand around overseein' a passel of lazy servants, why, sakes alive! I might just as well be a-workin'. McNeil and I almost quarrel about it; he's so anxious about my health—you know I never have been what you might call well since I had the grip—and McNeil would just spend his last dollar hirin' servants to keep me idle, but shucks! I believe idleness breeds sickness, anyhow, and then I don't want no niggers about me in the kitchen, nohow; to be forever watchin' em's worse than hard work. I know 'em; oh! I tell you, Mrs. Doyle, I know 'em. McNeil's so trustin' he believes everybody's honest 'cause he is; but I tell you, when we see things we see things, and pa owned forty of 'em before the war, and I reckon I ought to know 'em. No sirree; as I told McNeil, ses I, McNeil, ses I, just leave me alone; I'll 'tend to the house, and the store, too, when you're in town; and though I know I can't hold out forever at it, I'm a-goin' to keep on; they just can't down me, and the hotter it gets the harder I'll work—and then when Winnie starts in agin to school I'll have to take up her little odds and ends of jobs—Winnie, have you made up the beds and swept out?"

"Yes'm."

"Well, put some more wood in the stove, and wash the dishes, and pick some greens—yes'm, as I was a-sayin', Mrs. Doyle, I made up my mind Winnie sha'n't lose a day's schoolin' on my account; she'll have the best education money can buy—there's my own case: see what education done for me: before McNeil married me I was dependent on nobody but our dear Lord, and sometimes I think 'twould a-been better and more nobler, and more Christian-like if I'd a-kept on teaching school and learning the young ones how to get along, but, then, Mrs. Doyle, 'love's stronger than duty', as the poet says, and now we've got our own daughter to see to, and if I'd leave it to McNeil, he's just that liberal he'd a-sent her off to college long ago, but, ses I, McNeil, ses I, let her go through her home school first; let her get her rudiments, and then we'll send her on up higher—though, as to that, Mrs. Doyle, Winnie ain't very far behind the Professor, and as for being able to teach the little class, why from what I hear, they've took the pains to dig around in town and get some girl who ain't a bit bigger'n Winnie, and I doubt if she's much older, and——"

"I heard the directors got a new teacher," broke in Mother Doyle by sheer force. She knew if Mrs. McNeil held the floor much longer the morning train would be gone. She continued, "Have you seen her?"

"She took dinner here the day she put in her bid; she was such a frail-lookin' trick, I never once thought they'd pick her, so I had little to say, though——"

"I guess she'll be down to see about her board—the school opens soon, don't it, Winnie?"

"Yes'm, on the seventh."

"And I don't know where she'll board, either, Mrs.

Doyle. If she was a man she could board with the saw-mill folks; there was old Mrs. Dodd, who used to take boarders now and then, but she's gone, and——"

"Well, you have the name for keepin' the best boardin'-house here, Mrs. McNeil."

"Me? Oh, law, Mrs. Doyle! I really am ashamed of the table I set to my own family; it takes people who are used to boardin' to run anything like a boardin' house, and, you know, we've had *very* little experience in it; we don't *have* to take 'em in, and, consequently, when we let somebody beg us into boardin' 'em, I'm on pins and needles for fear we ain't makin' it home-like enough. McNeil tells me, ses he, 'Dear, I wouldn't take a single boarder; you don't *have* to, and you ain't used to it, and your health won't stand it—I'll just give you for pin money what you'd get from boardin' three or four, and be done with it.' Well, that's McNeil's way—hand to his pocket, ready to give and say no more about it; but it ain't mine, and besides, it's the company I want. If I let anybody board with me they must be able to be some company, and, law me! that little speck they've done engaged to teach here didn't look to me like she'd be company for a mute—not that she didn't talk, for she chattered away all through her meal, but, land sakes! I want people to talk some sense around me and not go glib, glib about nothing—he! he! I don't know where she'll board; but, of course, I don't want to say a solitary word against her, Mrs. Doyle; that might keep others from boardin' her. I ain't no dog in the manger, and if I can't say something good about anybody I don't say a word—for I'm a sinner like the rest, and as I tell our dear Lord, if he only had *me* to look after, he'd have as much on his hands as he could 'tend to—not goin' a-ready; sakes, woman, you run in and out like a mouse."

"I don't want to keep you from your work, and I know I'm keepin' myself from mine. Come when you get a resting chance, and you, too, Winnie; you know where to find our latch-string."

Mrs. McNeil accompanied Mother Doyle to the store, talking every step of the way, and saw her visitor courteously out, and the last Mother Doyle heard was her tongue going like a piston-rod until the closing of the front door shut off her voice.

Mrs. McNeil it was who closed the front door, though it was hot enough to have left it open, and even removed the roof and weather boarding. She returned to the rear of the store, where Uncle Alec McNeil was leaning somewhat dejectedly against the end of the counter.

"You'd better go up and go to bed, McNeil," she said, in a more masculine tone than she used to customers.

"I vow, *I* might as well go to town to buy, so long as you're determined to sell goods in this place, for it looks like you can't go near there without getting drunk and comin' home and droopin' about like a sick cat."

"Ah, hey, well, dear, I'm as anxious to leave here as you——"

"Shucks! So you say, but if you really meant it, you're too good a liar not to be able to sell out to some greeny."

"Heh!" grunted her husband, with a mild chuckle—a very mild chuckle. "I wish you would mention somebody about——"

"I didn't mean here, McNeil—you know these paupers couldn't buy a settin' of snake eggs. I meant in town; if you didn't put in your spare time there a-drinkin', you might kech a fish."

"Ah, hey!" sighed Uncle Alec McNeil, and then he went back of the counter and brought forth the slices of

butter. Handing them over to his wife as a peace offering he said:

"I mailed that letter, dear."

"Whose butter is this?" she asked, ignoring the remark.

"Some of the Doyleses," he answered, meekly. . .

"That old Doyle busybody brought it down here to make us believe she came to trade—did she spend any money?"

"No, dear."

"I thought not; she came swishing in there to the kitchen to pump me about the new teacher; did she say anything to you?"

"No, dear—just said she wanted to see you."

"Well, *that's* what she came for, and she's welcome to all the news she got out of me."

"She's only curious, I reckon, dear."

"Curious the de'il—she's on suffrance, like all the balance around here, and a boarder'd be a God-send. You say you mailed the letter."

"Yes—it's all right."

"If it's delivered soon as it gets there, she'll get it this morning, but old man Dodd's so slow, it's a wonder if he gets it stamped to-day."

"Heh!" laughed Uncle Alec McNeil. He made a policy of always laughing at "dear's" humor.

"I guess we'll get a new postmaster, dear, when old man Dodd's money comes."

"Shucks! He ain't still harpin' on that money?"

"Well, they say that Andy says, as soon as his pa gets it, he's goin' to hand it over to him, and he's goin' in business and support——"

"In business, ha! That drunken sot'll fall in Hick's furnace and kill himself sooner or later. His pa hand it

over to *him!* Shucks! Precious little money his pa'll ever get to hand over to him."

"I don't know, dear——"

"I know you don't; I know you don't. You don't know how cows gets calves, McNeil. The idea of your puttin' any stock in that jack-o'-lantern chase of old man Dodd's. If he fought in the Mexican War, why didn't he save his papers? I have no doubt he was in it, for he's old enough to a-ben in the Revolution; but Uncle Sam ain't a-goin' to take a rebel's say-so that he was in the Mexican War; if he'd been a Yankee he would'nt a-needed any papers to prove nothing, but them kind of pensions ain't given to folks down here—and if you put any faith in old man Dodd's talk about it, you're a bigger fool than I thought."

"Mamma!" called Winnie, "come in here and help me cut this meat."

Her mother replied in a loud, irritated voice:

"In a minute," and then remarked to her husband that it seemed like that child couldn't get along two minutes without her, and that if she was as shiftless with her books as she was at cooking, they might as well take her away from school.

"The school won't do her much good, nohow, dear," put in Uncle Alec McNeil. "I can barely write my name, and I couldn't read it if I was a-goin' to be hung; but I ain't done so poorly—especially in my courtin'."

"Shucks, McNeil! don't be simple,' rejoined "dear"; but he could see the blarney had dulled the edge of her peevishness for the time being, and on the strength of it he filled his pipe and shuffled out to the porch. Arriving at the door, he opened it and called back:

"I hear her now, whis'ling for the crossing."

Mrs. McNeil hastened forward, and together they listened

to the oncoming train. The rumbling grew louder and louder, and presently the hoarse shriek of the whistle sounded, and as it died away, Mother Doyle's portly form came hurrying from the direction of Hick's mill toward the depot.

"Ain't she gone home, yet?" declared Mrs. McNeil.

"She can't be goin' to town in her mother hubbard,"

"She's got a letter or something in her hand," spoke Uncle Alec McNeil, shading his eyes and screwing up his face.

"Hum, a letter! Um, hum! Just as I told you, McNeil; she thought she was a-foolin' somebody, eh? See, she's handin' it in on the mail car. Oh! I told you so—she wasn't down her for a howdy."

CHAPTER IV.

ANDY DODD.

Mother Doyle had taken an early start with her important letter, knowing that Mrs. MeNeil's tongue was a long lane to traverse, and after she had gone, Betty washed the breakfast things and then started in to give the kitchen a general cleaning. Every Saturday she set aside the forenoon for that purpose, giving the stove a polish, scrubbing the floor, and emptying the safe of leavings, and I'll venture to say, there wasn't a housewife about the country who kept a more parlor-like kitchen than did Betty; or, at any rate, kept it more cheerfully. There are whole regiments of tidy housekeepers. I've seen battalions of them myself, but, honestly, there are very few in my circle but who go at it in a most uncomfortable way. They grab a skillet, souse it in the water, dig at it with fierce energy, as though the skillet was *persona non grata* in that kitchen; then, having thumped it clean, they hurry to the stove, throw it against the fender to dry, pretty much as if they were pitching it into torment, and then, after spitting out a sharp "Ha!" meaning "one more burden off my hands," they charge back to the dishpan and dive in with a fury that makes me feel for the cups and plates and things doomed to their grasp.

Betty dispensed with all that nonsense, and in place of a dig and a jab, and a grunt and a fling, she hummed all sorts of little old timey tunes, stopping long enough, now

and then, to throw out some scraps and watch the chickens scramble. It was during one of those intermissions that she spied Andy Dodd coming around the walk which skirted the side of the house and ended at the back gate—the same walk that Mat took every evening when he went to feed the squealers.

Her eyes lit up with pleasure as she stepped out on the kitchen porch to greet him; and, for my part, I don't see where her eyes could be blamed. Andy Dodd was, take him out and out, a handsome boy. Tall—yes; I expect he measured close on to six feet. Slender; in fact, you might almost say raw-boned, if it hadn't been for the graceful hang of his clothes.

His cheek bones stood out just a mite too far; but that was offset by his dark brown eyes—bold, bad eyes, some dear old ladies might say; but, all the same, the kind of eyes that used to play havoc with those dear old ladies long ago.

His hair was dark,—not what you would call coal black, but close to it,—and his complexion was decidedly tanned. You could see that it was a perfectly healthy and normal color, too, for he wore his collar open and his sleeves rolled up. That was either a weakness or habit with Andy —possibly both. He knew he looked swagger with his shirt thrown open at the neck, and sleeves tucked up to his elbows, and held there by a pair of red silk supporters; furthermore, he knew the Pike girls thought he looked so picturesque. On the other hand, he ran the engine at Setton Hicks' sawmill—fired, as the boys termed it—and that sort of work necessitated a *decollete* attire. So it may have been either or both; when you come to know him better you may decide that point.

He was a great tobacco chewer, though it is scarcely

necessary to put the word tobacco in there, as everybody around Pike chewed, except Mat Doyle and Setton Hicks —barring the women folks, of course, who took it out in snuff. However, you mustn't become set against Andy for chewing. I'll admit it's a filthy vice, but our young friend Dodd didn't chew like Tom, Dick and Harry; nor, for the matter of that, like his pa. Old Man Dodd had been chewing as far back as the Mexican War, and should have been a very pattern for rising chewers, but the fact was, the old fellow had never learnt to spit beyond his chin. I've seen him many a time walk clear the length of his store—he kept a bob-tailed store conjointly with the Post Office—I've seen him come from behind the counter and go all the way out on the porch to spit, and when he came back there was most of it on his beard.

Andy wasn't that kind of a chewer; not that his being beardless was any advantage to begin with, but it just seemed like he could chew cleaner than anybody in the country. Unless you were to see him cut off a piece and place it in his mouth, you couldn't swear before a court whether or not he was chewing. It was the same way with everything else he did—easy and insinuating like, even to walking. Upon the occasion referred to he came on around the walk, up the kitchen steps, and took Betty's hands in his and it was all done as graceful as though he had been practising it regularly, which, to be sure, he hadn't.

"Howdy, hun; how are you to-day?" he asked, while Betty stooped down and kissed him, which would have been scandalous for anybody but you and me to have seen—old lady McNeil, for instance! As it was, "dear" was forever having them at the altar, and, I suppose, could she

have seen that kiss, baby carriages are the very least she would have prophesied.

"Fine as can be," answered Betty.

"Mill ain't running to-day?"

"Nope. broke the belting agin yesterday and Hicks had to go to town for a new one this morning. The old skunk did without one 'till the other busted from end to end; he won't spend a nickel unless there's eight cents comin' in right after it. Thank Heaven! he'll have to spend some more money soon, or go to shovelin' sawdust in that worn-out furnace himself."

"Why, you goin' to quit?"

Betty had asked Andy that question time and again, until it grew to be more habit than anything else. Andy had settled it in his mind a hundred times to leave Pike and go up to the city. He mostly came to those resolves after a spree, when he felt blue and got high notions in his head about money. Give him twenty dollars, plenty of native wine, a deck of cards, and some loose fellows who would play seven-up anywhere from five cents to a dollar a corner, and next day Andy would either be in a state of sickly sobriety and financial nothingness, or still spreeing and the cards running his way. If the former, he would come to see Betty and talk it out; if the latter, he would tell his boon companions while they were on their way up country for more wine, that he was goin' to quit that d——d sawmill and go to town, where he could make all kinds of money."

So Betty put the quit query to him because she knew he wanted to unburden himself, and as she did it, she placed a chair for him on the gallery, where he could watch her about the kitchen and not muss up the newly scrubbed floor.

"Yes," he replied, tilting backwards and brushing some dust off his trousers.

"You know, Bet, I'm foolin' away my time at that mill."

Betty nodded. Pike gossips and her own eyes kept it pretty steadily before her that he was fooling away his time, but not at that mill.

"Why," he went on, "I've been a blockhead all along to stay here firing for Hicks at a dollar and a quarter a day when there ain't a union man in town who'll come under two fifty. And you know how Hicks pays; a few dollars now and then, and expects you to take the rest out of that deadfall."

The deadfall referred to was the sawmill store, or as we say in the army, the commissary of subsistence. It was the place where Hicks' hands were furnished a dollar sack of flour for a dollar nd twenty-five cents; the same flour that Uncle Alex McNeil sold for cash at a dollar five, and to his mortgagors at one thirty. If you are quick at figures you can estimate that the deadfall was, then, within five cents of being as expensive as a mortgage. I have heard of farms being buried under mortgages, and I wouldn't be surprised if deadfalls haven't entombed many a good mill hand.

"Hicks knows he's underpayin' me," Andy continued; "every time I strike him for a raise he mouths about dull times and tells me I'm getting more than any of the other fellows. It's none of my look-out what he gives the rest: if they're dummies 'nough to slave for that Yankee at a dollar a day, that don't signify I've got to do skilled work at scab prices all my life. I'll go up to town and join the union, and then we'll see whether or no Hicks buys a new boiler. There ain't a fellow around here

beside me can run the thing without bustin' it, so it's a choice of a town man or a new engine with him when I quit."

"Have you got a job offered you up town?" asked Betty.

"No, not as you might say *offered* me, but as soon as I'm in the union there will be plenty of jobs comin' right along."

Like a great many theory touchers, Andy had well-defined ideas about the union, the only trouble being a wrong definition. He knew he bound himself to pay initiation fees, monthly dues, lodge assessments and walking delegate expenses on becoming a U. W., and he was also aware that after he became a U. W. he couldn't ply his avocation for less than union rates. But his calculations failing to start out on that good old rabbit-pie recipe, to-wit, "First catch the rabbit," were somewhat problematical.

"Well, Andy, you know best," Betty remarked, rinsing the dishpan, "but it seems to me I'd stay at Hicks' until I was sure of something better."

"Hun, it's just that much time thrown away, when I could be puttin' it in up town pickin' me out a job. Everybody around here gives it up that I'm about as good as there is in my line, so 'twon't be a bit of trouble to get an opening up yonder."

Betty still maintained a dubious air and Andy pursued the argument. I say argument, though there was precious little of it on Betty's side. Her silence was her argument and that worried Andy more than if she had downright fussed with him. But I have said that was her way; she had no inclination to argue, "jaw," as she termed it,and knowing that a shake of her head, raising

of her eyebrows or pursing of her pretty lips—especially the pursing—would draw Andy out; and knowing, as well, that drawing out was the very thing he needed, being a sort of a mental sedative on such occasions, she let him abuse Hicks, saw-mill, Pike, and nearly everything else, contenting herself with the pantomimic objections above mentioned.

"Why, great guns!" pursued Andy, warmly, "when I was up to town last month, Burke Sims told me it wouldn't be *any* trouble to walk right in the M. P. shops and get a job, and, hun, why look at it for a minute calmly, (something Andy wasn't doing, by the bye,) and you'll say the same. Burks Sims went up from the country, hadn't never done anything but snipe on a section, and where is he now? Runnin' his engine three trips a week out and pullin' down his two fifty a day. If Burke can do it, why can't I? I *can* do it, I know I can do it, but whenever I even whisper it to the old man, his back gets worse right off and, thunder and blazes! I wouldn't go away and have people sayin' I left the old man an invalid and all that. And then, too, the old man's always a-sayin' 'Jes' wait, Andy, jes' wait; 'twon't be long 'fore my pension goes through, and then I'll start you in business.' Great Heavens! That pension's been goin' through ever since I can remember. I wish I was like the old man, figgerin' on something that ain't never goin' to happen, and gettin' as much good out of it as if it did. Snakes! If I was that way, I'd stay here and drudge for that bow-legged ape the rest of my born days, and just imagine that some mornin' an engine would side track itself at the depot and whistle, 'Here, Andy, come, get in the cab and run me three out a week at two fifty,' and, accordin' to the old man's tom-fool way of thinkin',

I'd be as well off as if I really had a-hustled out, like I intend to do purty shortly, and show these back-water hoboes what money makin' is."

Andy could accuse his pa of building idle hopes on a Mexican War pension foundation, but he wouldn't have admitted that he himself was a dealer in air castles. No, no. He had twenty different architectural designs of the home he and Betty would erect, own, and occupy up at the city when he was foreman at the railroad shops, or the foundry, or the mills, or some other concern suited to his capacity. Those twenty plans were on regular draughtsman's paper and done in colors, with red ink for the brick work. Nothing air-castleish about them! They were as sure to materialize as fate—so Andy said—and not only those, but a headful of others.

Andy didn't know that Betty was the only one in Pike who had not the faintest shadow of a doubt about the solidity of those plans. He knew that Uncle Alec McNeil and "Dear" ridiculed the materializing of his pa's Mexican War pension. He knew that wicked Bill Ott had fabricated numberless rough jokes about that pension—he had laughed at them and helped give them currency. In short, he knew that that pension was the landmark of Pike's by-words. He knew all this because he scoffed at the pension himself. His nature was such that when he believed a thing, no amount of argument could convince him otherwise; caprice could, but reason never. Caprice formed his opinions and naught else could change them. Hence *his* plans were always worth one hundred cents and upward on the dollar—until some other plan sprang up, mushroom-like. When that happened, which was somewhat more frequent than presidential elections, he would hunt up Betty and tell her that he had been thinking it

over seriously, and really *her* plan wouldn't do at all, but here was one of his which would: whereupon, Betty, dear girl that she was, wouldn't say, "Why, Andy, the other was yours, too!" but would put her arm over his shoulder, listen to his new plan, and then say it was lots and lots better than hers,—that, in fact, she always had felt kind o' doubtful about hers.

Love, how blind! We often see mendicants on the street with "Pity the Blind" tagged on them. Love ought to have one, too—a great big sign. Poor love—precious little pity it gets, and, harsh truth, the least of all from the loved.

CHAPTER V.

WICKED BILL OTT.

"WANT anything downtown?" Mat queried, poking his head into the kitchen window as he came around the walk.

"Law, son, you liked to skared me!" Mother Doyle exclaimed, and Betty turned quickly from the dishpan and said:

"Stop by the postoffice, Mat; we're sure to hear something from Miss Hennon to-day."

"Um-huh."

That was Mat's extent of conversation when Miss Hennon's name bobbed up, which Betty was forever making it do.

"Well—uh—do you want any truck—sugar, or stuff like that?"

"No, I don't reckon we do, son; how's the soda runnin', Bet?"

"Oh, we won't need anything, ma, yet awhile: let's wait and stock up when Miss Hen——," but Mat's head vanished, and his "provoging" sister, as Uncle Alec McNeil would say, rushed to the window and called:

"Don't forget the postoffice, Mat."

"Um-huh."

"And you can open the letter, if it's there."

"Um-huh."

"But don't run home too fast to tell us she's a-comin'."

"*Um—huh!*" And if Mat had been at all, even just the

least bit, on Wicked Bill Ott's order, he'd have terminated his "um-huhs" with ——, or ——, or —— ——! or all three. Instead of that, he went on out the front gate and swung into his regular loping stride, which Betty always characterized as Mat's slow-hurry.

There wasn't a housewife in Pike those days who would miss singing out "Howdy" to Mat when he passed. Let any frying-size youngster in any yard look up and see our friend, and he'd yell:

"*Maw!* Mister Mat's comin'," whereupon maw would pause polishing pans to give Mister Mat a greeting. They always made Mat feel mighty good, those little howdies, and any fellow who knows that the neighbors respect him for that exotic integrity, can well be allowed an inch or so of pride. At any rate, Mat's stride lengthened scarce perceptibly as he shortened space between his home and the depot. He was expecting a harvester on the freight. Mat was one of those unheard-of male inhabitants of railroad villages who never went near the depot unless he had business there. The rest of pantalooned Pike were at the station waiting for the southbound passenger when he arrived. He called to the agent:

"Howdy, Deck—when'll the freight be in?" giving the boys a nod here and a shake there.

"Just ahead of 67, Mat; she's due in twenty minutes; how's all?"

"So, so. I'm lookin' for that cutter this mornin'."

Of course the boys all wanted to hear what Mat had to say; and, of course, the boys all followed Mat inside; and, of course, they all heard his remark about the cutter; and, of course, they had to hear some more about that identical cutter.

"Oh, it's one o' these new-fangled machines," Mat answered to the general interrogative.

"I ain't good at describin' 'em,' he went on, "but you all can see it when it comes."

"Comin' this mornin', is it, Mat?" Uncle Alec McNeil asked.

Uncle Alec McNeil was down expecting an express package. Everybody always knew the contents of the express package Uncle Alec McNeil was looking for, but he nevertheless kept up a happy fiction that it was some store goods he had just run out of and ordered in too big a hurry for the freight, (which was so, in part, for when he emptied one of those express packages he was generally in a hurry for another).

"Yeh, Uncle Alec McNeil; I b'lieve it'll get in this mornin'—hope so, anyhow, as I wouldn't want to lose this much time a-waitin'."

"And you say its a new-fangled cutter, my son?"

"Yes, sir; one of these things that cut an' bind the sheaf, and pitch it out for you."

"Well, uh, well," slowly began the old merchant, winking at the boys—he was considerable of a wit, so Pike said —"How do you work her? Jes put her in the field and jes turn her loose, an' she—uh—she—uh—starts a bilin'?"

Everybody guffawed and stamped at this brilliant sally, and Uncle Alec McNeil loudest of all. The fact was, when he laughed at his own jokes he resembled for several minutes an acute case of cramps.

Mat waited until the laughing partially died down, and simply said:

"If they tell the truth about the thing, it's worth havin'; but advertisements and truth ain't, as you might say,

twins. How about 'em, Deck—the cutters—you lived up where they were common?"

"Oh, they're out o' sight, Mat; but it takes a sight o' manipulatin' to run one.'

"Sort—er, sort—er, conflipercated, hey?" put in Uncle Alec McNeil, and the guffawing and stamping rose to par again.

"*I* wouldn't *have* one o' the things," Bill Ott said, emphatically, ripping a piece of boxing with his knife. "Why," he went on, the crowd attending closely, (he was the wickedest man in all Pike, and it paid to listen to him), "why, look at the Tomassons, and that farm they stole with other folks' money—they've got it littered up with such d—— truck, mowers, 'n reapers, 'n h—— knows what all. They can't set a hen on that cussed place without startin' up a whole d—— lot o' machinery; takes all the profit they make for repairs, let alone the fust cost; talk about being eternally bothered with such like, why, d—— my hog-stealin' hide, *I'd* rather be nibbled to death by a passel o' d—— ducks!"

The guffawing and stamping shot way above par at the conclusion of Bill's very instructive discourse.

Uncle Alec McNeil's wit was of a more neutral kind. Being a public man to the extent of selling goods to all without regard to race or religion, he felt impelled to eliminate profanity, and thereby rob said wit of its essence, its bouquet, as far as Pike went. But Uncle Alec McNeil was strictly business, and doubtless orthodox. Far different with Bill Ott. Bill was wicked; he gloried in it, so why should I be squeamish about telling the fact. Bill, like a good many of us, had gotten Christianity confused with lots of professed Christians he had seen, and the result in his case was a colossal contempt for both. I shan't

pretend to say Bill had been actually driven to wickedness by that, for I'm inclined to think that had he been born in heaven he would have acquired the title of Wicked Bill Ott as firmly as Pike had fastened it upon him. But what I do say, and say earnestly, that if Bill had been used to see more *doing* and less *shouting,* he would not have had the face to parade his wickedness so elaborately. There's nothing gives vice more backbone than to point to a paragraph in a newspaper reporting the elopement of some preacher with another man's wife, or the hypothecating of juvenile foreign mission funds by some Sunday School superintendent, or some other every-day occurrence of the like.

Bill held that when we died we were on the precise level of a dog—we were dead, and that was the end of us; consequently, he believed in living as much like a dog as it was decent for a dog to let him in carrying out the similarity.

"What if I do?" he would ask, in defence of his living; "dogs air at least white enough to bite face to face, while yer d—— psalm-singers *back*-bites' and, from what I kin see of their religion, when you've said *back*-bitin', you've cleared the deck."

Such tenets were, of course, very wrong; but, nevertheless, when Bill branched out on religion, he always made "them psalm-singers" an offer, the sincerity of which was indisputable—for Bill was nothing if not sincere.

"Here," he'd say, with an oath, and shutting his knife; "you mourner's bench hypocrites, *live* Christ, instead o' everlastin'ly preachin' Him so d—— much, and I'll jine you; but, till you *do,* I don't want none o' yer honey fugglin' aroun' me. Gimme value received an' yer sky-pilots air welcome to Bill Ott's grub seven days out o' six!

Come on, Andy, les' go git a gallon!" and Andy, who was Bill's bottle-holder in theology or tremens, would "come on."

Petticoated Pike had spent lots of sleepless nights and gabbling days worrying over Bill Ott's wickedness; not that they cared particularly about the wickedness as it affected Bill, for they all very cheerfully allowed that perdition was Bill's natural, logical and just portion hereafter. But his immoral effect on Beardless Pike was an ever-growing thorn in their sides. They harbored some insane notions that Andy and the rest of the boys would never have discovered the firm market value of four aces on enameled pasteboard, or seven and eleven on cube-shaped bones, or of nocturnally roasted fowls; or that those poor lads would never have assisted in keeping the demand steady for grape, corn or bug-juice, but for the wiles of Wicked Bill: that, in a word (speaking for myself —don't imagine petticoated Pike ever condensed the situation to the proximity of a word)—that, in a word, Wicked Bill had corrupted the boys' morals. Bill, when notified of the verdict, which was pretty frequent, as beardless Pike loved to hear him swear, would remark contemptuously: "It's a pack o' —— —— —— lies! Them —— —— —— boys never had no morals to corrupt! Why, h—— fire, fox-fire, an' ole Mrs. Bran, Andy you'd be drunker'n a biled owl year in an' out 'f 'twasn't for me. I help git away with too much booze for you to stay loaded more'n *half* your time, an' me, the other half —but these wimen folks don't give me no credit for it. They're a-goin' clatter, clatter, clatter 'bout Bill Ott all the time, an' never say nothin' nohow—make me think of these —— church bells of a meetin' day: a long tongue an' a holler head, a h—l of a fuss an' nothin' said! Come

on, boys, I got a new deck; less try it a shot, two-bits on the corner!" and the usual termination would follow the usual invitation.

Thus was Wicked Bill Ott. I could easily fill two volumes, octavo, with "The Best Sayings of Bill, the Ungodly," but a strict compliance with the United States statutes would necessitate blanks, and dashes, and exclamation points from cover to cover; and as that sort of literature becomes monotonous, we will pass Bill *en passant* —bid him *au revoir* but not good-by.

CHAPTER VI.

TERRAPIN AND TEACHER.

THE freight train Mat was waiting for came puffing in, and after a great deal of jolting and waving of hands by every man in the crew, to which the engineer paid not the slightest attention, stopped.

These railroad fellows are the transient deities of such towns as Pike, and they are very much aware of it, too. The favored kid of Juvenile Pike who is on a joking basis with one of the freight crew justly considers himself cock o' the walk; and nothing gives one of Beardless Pike such prestige in getting the cut for deal, or the first pull from an uncorked jug, as being on a tobacco chewing equality with some passenger brakeman; while the very apex of exclusiveness is reached if the father of the family is on a sufficient intimacy with some conductor to take him behind the depot between stops and uncork a bottle. But if some member of the community is seen talking with an engineer, he is ever afterwards the oracle of the road, and can even tell the depot agent when the auditors will come through.

As Mat's few relations with the lords of cinders were of the purest business sort, and as the lords of cinders always made it a point to transact their part of the relations with as much surliness as possible, he was, therefore, no longer the center of talk when the freight stopped. So he waited modestly until the usual dab of merchandise

was put off, and after the crew had rolled the door to and the train had backed up and gone on the siding, he called:

"Ain't my cutter there, Deck?"

"Nope," answered the agent, running his eye down the bill.

A good many of us would have considered some strong expletive as to the ultimate destination of the road eminently essential on such an occasion, but Mat simply remarked:

"Well, I'm sorry I lost this much time a-waitin," and those of Juvenile, Beardless and Pantalooned Pike who had left off paying court to the crew to come and see who the merchandise was for, looked at Mat much as you would pity a man who'd consider it a waste of time to get a glimpse of heaven.

Mat had already turned to go when Bill Ott sang out, winking to the crowd:

"Here comes 'Sixty-seven' Mat; you'd better wait, she may be on *it;* Uncle Alec McNeil gets some of his stuff on *it.*"

Great guffawing was thereupon indulged in, but minus Uncle Alec McNeil. He grew red in the face—that is, as red as his already emblazoned countenance *could* grow, and, pretending to take Bill seriously, said:

"Why, shucks! they never ship field tools by express, do they?"

Mat appreciated a joke on the old merchant as well as any of them, and he replied:

"Jugs are sometimes used in the field—when you're fur from the well."

This brought down the house, and Uncle Alec McNeil was vainly cudgeling his wits to make a retort, when the

whistle of the passenger drew general attention. Mat so seldom saw a passenger "face to face," as the saying is, that he decided to waste just one more minute, especially as the boys would doubtless joke Uncle Alec McNeil considerably about his package. "Sixty-seven," as she was professionally known, came to a labored stop, and Mat and the boys, being busy looking down the platform watching the express car door to see the forthcoming package, never noticed the single passenger who alighted.

The agent duly receipted for the package, and, taking it under his arm, started for the office. The train began to pull out, and Mat was on the point of saying something to start the guffawing, when he felt a slight touch on his arm and heard a mighty soft, musical voice ask:

"Can you tell me the way to Mrs. Doyle's?"

Mat faced around, as did all the rest, and he clean forgot his intended joke, and was conscious of only two things, viz.: that he was being looked at by a young lady he never saw before, and that the boys were all craning their necks behind him.

"Yes'm," he said, in answer to her question, at the same time removing his hat; "I live there.'

"Oh! do you? Well, is it far?"

"No'me—just a quarter; I'll—uh—show you—lemme have your satchel; come on; it's out this way, 'm."

Having hustled out that much in a disjointed breath, he grabbed the little valise she held in her hand and bolted, rather than walked, off, and the young lady struck out after him with a very undecided gait, and a very much more undecided air as to whether or not he was quite sane.

Meanwhile, the crowd had been looking with only the intensity a village crowd can look; next, their looking

changed to gaping; then smiling, and, finally, when Uncle Alec McNeil called to the bolting Mat: "Your *cutter's* come, ain't it, my son?" the preceeding guffawing dwindled to insignficance. The young lady quickened her pace and gained Mat's side. She glanced behind and saw Juvenile, Beardless and Pantalooned Pike in various spasmodic states of contorted mirth, and thought: "Gracious me! I'd better be with one lunatic than a dozen," and fell into, or, more properly, climbed into, Mat's slow-hurry, glancing half-timidly and half-amusedly at him the while.

"I-i-s your n-name D-Doyle?" she asked, pantingly, and Mat, on looking furtively down at the young lady, slowed up with a sudden jolt and answered.

"Yes'm—excuse me, I forgot I was walkin fast."

"That's all right; my name's Hennon; I received the letter your—you all wrote me, and I thought, you know, as I had to choose quick on account of school opening so soon, I'd answer it in person, you know."

"Yesm," remarked Mat, shifting the valise, which was a dreadful little valise, and didn't require shifting at all by such a strong, big fellow as Mat.

"Yes'm," he ventured again, recollecting that she had said "you know" twice, (and twice very fetchingly, at that), and once more he furtively peeped down at that little hat. That wasn't the hat he had heard so tropically spoken of by Dud. Birds and feathers? Why, he couldn't see a bird on it, and as for feathers—to be sure, there was one little raven-black wing; but it was a mighty lonesome little raven-black wing, and it had nothing gaudy or expensive looking about it. He could have taken an oath it formerly belonged to a blackbird or young crow. He thought it looked decidedly better than the many-colored paper roses and wide ribbons he had been so used to

seeing at Pike fairs and picnics. It was a very little wing; but there it was, perched on a very little hat (Mat wondered how many acorns the hat would hold—maybe a dozen), and the hat was perched on a very little head, and, as his eyes kept creeping and peeping down, down, down, just a *lee-tle* mite further with each creep and each peep, he discovered that the head was on a very little lady; and he shifted that minute traveling bag again and wondered why he, such a lumbering big man, was afraid of her, such a delicate little woman. Then he took another peep under the little hat-brim, and thought, "No, 'delicate' ain't the word; she don't appear to be ailin'; but her face is mighty soft like—and purty."

Mat was right. The young lady's face was "soft like"; not "soft like" in the meaning of shallow, for her eyes were bright and intelligent, and her lips were firm enough looking for a judge; but "soft like" in its youth and tenderness. Mat had hardly believed it when she spoke her name and he had peeped at her simple head-dress. Now, after he had noted the well-rounded profile, and seen the open, confiding, buoyant look of her eyes, even though at a very acute angle, he concluded that surely she was some other Miss Hennon. The Miss Hennon Dud had talked about was bound to be ugly, sharp-nosed, hatchet-faced and way over voting age. True, Dud had never seen her, and had never expressed any ardent desire to see her, which wouldn't have been the case if he had been given an accurate, or anyways sort of an accurate, description of *this* Miss Hennon. Mat was too well-acquainted with Dud's partiality for "soft like—and purty" faces to have any doubt on that score. Of course, he—staid old Mat—never let those kind of faces turn *his* head; but Dud always would, let come what might.

Dud's Miss Hennon was, according to Dud, none other than some dried-up Yankee old maid, run in on Pike through the machinations of Deacon Hicks; and, inasmuch as the Deacon was homely himself—which Mat felt bound to admit—Dud, who didn't like the Deacon, naturally put Miss Hennon—*his* Miss Hennon—in that good man's facial category. Dud's Miss Hennon's voice was unquestionably rasping—Dud said all Yankee old maids voices were, and as he had once been as far North as Cairo, he certainly knew; but *this* Miss Hennon —why, her voice floated up to Mat's ears like tiny sheep bells in the valley; nothing file-like about that voice, although Cupid might find it wonderfully adapted to sharpening arrows. So Mat scouted Dud's Miss Hennon from his brain and put *this* Miss Hennon in her stead, and then mentally decided that he would have been scared of the other one—the Yankee old maid—but he honestly couldn't be very much afraid of this one. After which cogitations and conclusion, he shifted the little satchel, and the young lady looked up demurely and said:

"I'm afraid it's heavy; you'd better let me take it—I can *tote* it," she said, affecting our idiom with a delightful emphasis.

"Heavy! *This?*" and Mat held it at arm's length in front of him, and continued: "I ain't used to—uh—handlin' 'em much, 'cept when mother goes a-visitin', and hers would make four o' these; but it ain't as purty as this," he added, suddenly, by way of evening things up.

"Is Mrs. Doyle your mother?"

"Yes'm."

"I thought, maybe, the Mrs. Doyle who wrote me the letter was—that is, I thought when you said your name was Doyle that you were her husband."

"Huh!" exclaimed Mat, with a half-laugh, and then murmured good-humoredly: "No'me, she's my mother. I reckon I'd have to hunt a good while 'fore findin' a wife like mother—'cept Betty."

"Betty?"

"My sister."

"Oh!—grown?"

"I reckon you might call her grown, but she always seems little to me: I'm older, you see."

"Yes; the older ones never realize that the tots grow up so fast: I know it was the same way in my family after I had grown up."

Grown up! Mat peeped down again and thought:

"Grown up! Gee! They must be powerful little folks and quick growers in your family."

This time the young lady caught him peeping, and she said, laughingly:

"I expect you are surprised to hear me say I'm grown up. Well, you know I think I've been grown up a long time. I have had my own living to make, and. you know, it seems so when it's that way, doesn't it?"

Mat was too busy blushing at being caught to more than answer, "Yes'm"; and, indeed, on encountering those twinkling brown eyes, he had darted back in his shell like a terrapin. The little valise came to his rescue, and he shifted it again and remarked, as though it was a subject of the greatest moment and demanded immediate solution: "I shouldn't think these here traps 'd hold sca'cely anything."

"They don't; school teachers don't have *sca'cely* anything to hold, you know," she replied, with that charming little emphasis on the idiom.

"I didn't mean that—excuse me," floundered the ter-

rapin, not daring to come very far out of his shell again after having said such an unwise thing.

"Oh! I know you didn't," she said, with cheery reassurance; "I was just joking. School teachers aren't poor —that is, if they are the right kind of teachers. Of course, if they teach for money alone and lose sight of the profession, why, you know, they'll think themselves ever so poor; but a teacher who loves her calling isn't poor. I wouldn't change places with a—a—plumber," she declared, and laughed a short, merry little laugh. Mat, not being a city man, failed to catch the joke on the poor plumber, but if he had, it's odds that he wouldn't have laughed much. He was, at that precise juncture, too much staggered in mind. Here was *this* Miss Hennon talking about money as though it was quite a secondary consideration, whereas Dud's Miss Hennon, according to Dud, was surely "out for the dollar," those being Dud's very words. Mat decided emphatically to bring Dud to see *this* Miss Hennon and make him acknowledge his error. But, "hold on," he thought, suddenly; he was thinking about bringing Dud to see *this* Miss Hennon, and here they were only at the front gate, with Mother Doyle and Betty yet to meet *this* Miss Hennon and *this* Miss Hennon yet to meet them, and casting up of probable likes and dislikes yet to be had. The reflection made Mat smile behind his teeth. Oh! wouldn't Betty joke him if she knew he was planning to bring somebody to meet a young lady whose arrival he had been fearing worse than war, pestilence and famine,—the contemplation of whose boarding with them had been one unbroken shudder,—the mention of whose name had acted even worse on him than sausages, or bacon, or smoke-houses! He trembled, as he went behind Miss Henon up the walk, for fear Betty had *heard* his

thoughts. He wasn't nearly as afraid of the little lady in front of him as he had believed and dreamt he would be; in fact, he could now realize that Miss Hennon would be a great addition on Betty's account: she could be the finest sort of company for Betty; my! Betty was in luck! But he—he would have dropped that little valise and made tracks for good if he thought Betty would ever be so outrageous as to pretend to read his mind, or start any other sort of foolishness before Miss Hennon. It wouldn't have amounted to so much if she had materialized like unto Dud's Miss Hennon; but now, since she had turned out to be *this* Miss Hennon, it would never do—never in the world. Betty must be warned, and if that didn't suit, begged; and if that failed, bribed, to—to—to—not hurt Miss Hennon's feelings; yes, that was it—not hurt Miss Hennon's feelings by any of her joking. He didn't care as far as he himself was concerned—that is, there was nothing to joke *him* for; but he would feel mighty cut up to have Betty hurt Miss Hennon's feelings; she had to make her own living, which was, of itself, a hardship of the worst kind. At that stage of his reflections you couldn't have made him remember that he had recently told Dud, even in fun, that teaching wasn't anything much. Nor could you have made him own up that he had but recently told Betty it would take more than a teacher to make him break a principle. I don't exactly mean that, either, for Mat really was, as Dud truthfully remarked, "the beatenest fellow for principle"; but Mat was a logician, too—one with a strongly twisted lawyer's kink, and had you reminded him of his words to Betty, he would have came back at you in a terribly innocent manner, thus:

"Why, I didn't exactly, as you might say, mean *any*

teacher; of course, it *would* take more'n a teacher like Dud's Miss Hennon to make me break a principle; but *this* Miss Hennon wouldn't try to make a feller break a principle in the first place, and if she did, I'll be bound it'd be some bad principle he'd ought to 'a' broke long ago."

Whether Mat was studying all this or not is purely a matter of speculation; but whatever was uppermost in his head had caused him to stalk on behind the young lady as though the house was forty miles, instead of steps, away. Not until he heard a stir in the hall did he perceive that their approach was observed, and when he glanced up and just caught a bare glimpse of Betty darting across the floor, he drew back in his shell with a Jack-in-the-box suddenness, and shifted that little valise like a fellow juggling a powerfully hot potato.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEACON AND THE JOKE.

Deacon Hicks was standing before the lone window of his office—his office and "deadfall" combined. He was gazing out on the exciting panorama of seven pigs pumping their ma dry over by the town well; a jaundiced-looking star route plug nibbling the hitching-post over by the postoffice, and some enervated specimens of Beardless Pike pitching horseshoes over by the depot—lads too far gone to expend their muscular power on plough-handles or hoe-stocks.

The Deacon smiled a sweet smile of sanctified happiness. The Deacon was a holy man, and, as a general thing, discountenanced smiles; for he was orthodox as well as holy. Yet the Deacon smiled. I might ask, after the language of McGuffey's First Reader, "Do you see the Deacon smile?" but as Doré failed miserably to render me a faithful likeness of the Deacon to accompany the query, it would, of course, be an absurdity. You don't see the Deacon smile, and I greatly fear, unless you have seen him in life. I cannot give you a recast of his outer self with due and faithful comprehensiveness, smiling or not smiling.

Or, I might exclaim, with the one-syllable Scriptorian, "Oh! See the Deacon smile!" but the exclamation would perchance jar the atmosphere of chaste joy which pervadeth the Deacon's office—his office and "deadfall" com-

bined. Or, I might dive into Harkness' verbs and fish out an imperative: "*See* the Deacon smile," were it not for arousing the combative inquiry of, "Why, pray, should I stop work to see the Deacon smile?" Why, indeed! And why, forsooth, shouldn't you? It isn't often you are allowed the privilege of seeing this holy man smile. At Christmastide, when he hands the costly bags of priceless candy to the thrice-blessed jewels of Petticoated Pike, *then* he smiles—one smile for each bag, and one for each infantile jewel. At harvest-time, when the little nickels and the wee dimes are placed in his (temporary) keeping by the zealous Little Lights and Busy Bees and other Pike tots, to be forwarded to the dear little naked Hottentots, freezing in Hottentotville, *then* he smiles—one smile for each nickel and dime, one smile for each Little Light and Busy Bee, and one extra-sized, super-juicy smile for good measure to the credit side of the Hottentot fund (and I ween, between us, that extra-sized, super-juicy smile is the nearest approach to things not rust or moth proof which the credit side of the Hottentot fund ever experiences).

But, between these smiling festivals, the good man's countenance is devoid of sunny ripples. He frowneth; yea, he frowneth muchleth. Male Pike, meaning the three great divisions of Juvenile, Beardless and Pantalooned Pike, causes him to frown frequently; though the only visible effect thus far apparent on Male Pike, was when the Deacon had once frowned a most ferocious frown and Wicked Bill Ott had said: "I'll be shot clar through my chicken-stealin' gizzard if the Deacon's little inch-an'-a-quarter forehead don't look 'zackly like a strip o' rich pine mouldin' when he frowns that away!" Male Pike had on that occasion guffawed wantonly, but still the Deacon frowned—one frown for each guffaw.

So, I must inquire again, even at the risk of offense, "And why, forsooth, should you not see the Deacon smile?"

Added to the rarity of the thing, which should enhance its commercial value if nothing else, the Deacon's smile furnishes a study in physiology that is at once sublime, and—no, I will not say ridiculous, but like-producing. The Deacon was not a handsome man. That and his piety are two subjects on which no dispassionate pair of observers could disagree. They stand out as shining exceptions and rebukes to the axiom that you can always find two parties to differ on anything. Dud, true enough, had very pronounced notions as to the Deacon's piety; but they were merely notions, not deserving the dignified appellation of views. He called the Deacon an arrant humbug, and said if there was anything to again justify Christ's appearance on earth, it would be to annihilate such pretenders to His grace. But when Mat pinned his old chum down to hard proof Dud would have to crawfish and take refuge on the very unstable island of generalities. True enough, also, Wicked Bill Ott and his cohorts, who were locally styled the Ott outfit, held the Deacon's piety below the level of an empty jug with a hole in the bottom. But then the Ott outfit, like our political parties, felt bound to oppose and villify anything or anybody who threatened their existence. Petticoated Pike's hysterical holiness and Mat's unassuming Christianity no more escaped mud baths than did the Deacon's professional brand,—the only difference being that in the two former instances the mud was only lightly and occasionally administered, while in the latter it was daubed and smeared on in season and out of season, during revivals and between revivals. But

Dud's and the Ott outfits' notions had a very insignificant quotation on Pike's Church 'Change.

Petticoated Pike *knew* Deacon Hicks was a follower of the Lamb; they just simply *knew* it; and, of course, against that clear, cogent, and concise exposition of the matter, there could be no disputing.

Mat, dear old fellow that he was, sincerely believed that Deacon Hicks was a power for good. "To the good, all things are good," and that truism carries with it the correlative that the truly good are poor judges of human nature. To have told Mat that the species of which Deacon Hicks was such a pronounced success, used the pure precepts of the Gallilean for the basest and most sordid motives, would have terribly shocked his confiding faith in the Cloth. He admitted that now and then, at very rare intervals, some indiscreet sheep strayed too near the wolf, but he accounted for this on the reasonable ground that no body corporate, whatsoever its aim, creed, or tenet, could always expect an entire unsullied membership. If indiscretions, (that was the strongest term Mat would employ), if indiscretions did sometimes occur in the Church, he said they were indiscretions of the head and not the heart, and inasmuch as Mat regarded the inside of Deacon Hicks' head as the veritable sanctorum of business and religious perfection he wouldn't hear to any of Dud's idiomatic epithets.

Thus the controversy on Deacon Hicks' piety as Pike saw it. There was no such division as to his physique.

I have said that there was nothing exceptional enough about Uncle Alec McNeil's makeup to cause a stir in a crowd. Though the Deacon wasn't near as tall, nor as broad, nor as long, nor as heavy, nor so rotund as Uncle Alec McNeil, yet every separate feature and member of

his anatomy would have not only caused commotion in a crowd—an ordinary, mediocre, common, every-day crowd —but would have precipitated a gathering of medical students into paroxysms of experimental ecstacy. Not being a medico, and having seen the holy Deacon in all his moods and modes, I can now contemplate him with feelings somewhat akin to equanimity. Consequently, there is small danger of my soaring into the mythical realms of a railroad scenic description.

It would be a misnomer to call the Deacon's feet large; they were in too chaotic a state of corns and bunions for it to be determined wether they really were enormous feet or liliputian mountain ranges. His shoes, number nine, double E, were simply full and spilling over with feet. They were hacked and slashed and gapped to allow breathing holes for the corns and bunions alluded to. If it was a fact, as Petticoated Pike *knew* it was, that Deacon Hicks' soul was too big for his body, it could have unquestionably found elbow room in his feet, and when the summons at last should have come to shuffle off its corns and bunions, it could have mounted gently and easily upward through the leather port-holes. Any one might suppose that Nature, with her eye ever to utility and economy, would only put such gigantic foundations for Gothic pillars, whereas the fact was, if Wicked Bill Ott's testimony is to be believed (and in this isolated instance it is), the Deacon had swapped legs with a mocking bird and beat the mocking bird all hollow in the trade. The Deacon could have worn trousers *a la* Louis the Fourteenth and still have had a vacuum left, but, for some unaccountable reason, he preferred breeches that could have been transferred to a bloomerite without any letting out at the seams. The good man's legs were not on a footing of the closest intimacy,

albeit they were perpetually bowing to one another: to be plain about it, his legs were fearfully and amazingly bowed. To see the Deacon upon a windy day put out down the street with his pants flaping wildly and nothing but those number nine, double E's preventing his pins from being blown away, reminded one forcibly of a pair of chair rockers in tow sacks; or one of those paper-enveloped circus hoops after the clown has jumped through it. Wicked Bill Ott allowed that he'd almost join the church to get such a pair of curved cornstalks as the Deacon's; he could then sit astride a barrel in a seven-up game and play his hand with luxuriant ease, and drink without moving.

The Deacon's neck was the envy of every turkey gobbler in the neighborhood. His Adam's apple was its most prominent feature, though its general hue was not by any means to be sneezed at. If you have ever seen a proud gobbler puff the blood all up in his neck you have seen the Deacon's at its most scarlet period. What produced such a significant color is entirely a matter of conjecture. Petticoated Pike just *knew* that all sorts of "licker," from the ginger bitters dispensed by Uncle Alec McNeil to the city lightning-rod variety, produced the ever-blooming morning glory on the tip of Wicked Bill Ott's nose; but Petticoated Pike just *knew,* too, that Deacon Hicks was too good a Baptist to ever drink. So we can't lay his flamboyant neck to the Demon Rum. Nor can we ascribe it to the pride that causes Mister Gobbler to grow so red in the craw, for we know that good man was orthodox, and orthodoxy is the antipodes of that ribald sort of pride; and there being no other hypothesis to work on, we can account for the hue of that neck only as

an insoluble phenomenon of nature—poor Nature! you come in for a good deal, don't you?

The Deacon could have concealed the color behind a high collar had it been brought there by any undue means, but as it "just growed," he felt no qualms of exposure. He wore a little strip of starched linen around his neck, which was nigh overlapped by a very narrow, dingy, black string tie—mostly string, and very little tie, either as to material or construction.

The Deacon's face was the crowning masterpiece of his "earthly temple," as he was wont to call his body. On a specimen of the monkey tribe engaged in a painful search for an evasive flea, the Deacon's face, as he smiled, would have been a faithful representation from a strictly zoological standpoint; but perched on a man's shoulders, even though very skimpy, round, stooping shoulders, that face wouldn't do from *any* logical standpoint. It was both sublime and ridiculous. Sublime, to contemplate how closely we are allied to the chattering simians; sublime, to study how Nature can perform such multifarious and antagonistic feats out of the same clay, and ridiculous to look at it—just simply look at it. If the little girl in the joke had been there, she would have been eminently justified in asking: "Deacon, do that again, please, sir; ma didn't see?"

The righteous man was smooth shaven; that is, as smooth shaven as a pair of ridge-like jawbones and door-knob cheek bones, dotted generously with bilious bumps, will allow one to be. Little, tiny tufts of brittle, sandy beard peeped here and there between the red blotches where the razor had been unable to dig, or gouge, or scrooge them out; but, on the whole, we may stretch a point and say the Deacon was smooth shaven.

As he stood by his lone window, with his face enveloped in that clarified smile, he showed to whoever cared to observe them a collection of teeth that were the wonder and despair of dentistry. Like the song about the unfortunate man's leg, some of his teeth were longer than they really should have been; some were shorter; others were missing; some were pointing outwards; some inwards; some sideways; some had quit pointing altogether; but none of them seemed to grow or know straight up. They had long since given up the notion of dying with the Deacon, and were now preceding him to the grave in various stages of decay, until they all resembled the sharp-pointed, blackened, sapling stumps we see in recently fired woods.

The meek man's eyes were devoutly in keeping with their owner's piety—meek, docile, mild as the surface of an artificial pond. They were not the common convex eyes you see in ordinary sockets; they were a creation unto themselves. They didn't bulge out or sing back, but stood on an exact level with his cheek, and it was impossible to look into the filmy, greenish, stagnant pupils and imagine any such thing as depth. The thickness of a pin-point would have been of sufficient length to have strung them on and spun them around without the slightest danger of their falling off. They were fringed by a fiery raw circle of lids produced by sore eyes, and, to take in eyes and lids at a sweep, put one in mind of looking square at the noonday sun, when nothing at all is visible in the centre and only a red ring all around.

Wicked Bill, in allowing the pure man an inch and a quarter for his forehead, was perhaps allowing too great a margin, but, of course, Wicked Bill was merely guessing. Happening to have the exact measurement at hand, I can certify that Deacon Hicks' forehead at no place

between his temples exceeded an inch in width, and a mightly scant inch at that. Even at the point where most foreheads merge with the nose, the width was the same, for there was not enough space between his eyes to allow either merging or measurement.

The Deacon's hair grew in one clump of sandy-colored roots at the farthest middle point, back, on the top of his head, and it radiated from its base in jagged lines like streaks of lightning. Sad to record, his hair did not imbibe the Deacon's general spirit of docility; it stubbornly refused all persuasion of brush or comb, and remained an unconverted daub of tow-like wretchedness. The cranium it adorned had just enough room, and no more, to accommodate it, sparse as it was, and as to the hat that went with the cranium, a muddy, black-brown-looking piece of felt, misshapen, perforce and per wear, I can find use for Bill's spare quarter of an inch—its size being six and a fourth to a T.

The last and *strongest* attribute of this virtuous man was his breath: it positively wouldn't bear description, even were I able "to paint a stench."

There he is. Stand off—beyond gunshot of his breath—and see him smile. Do you ask why the Deacon smiles, gentle reader? Sit down and I will tell thee. The Deacon smiles because he discerns the point of a joke. The Deacon never jokes, himself, nor does he encourage others to do so, holding that jokes cause smiles, smiles happiness, and happiness unorthodoxy. But this joke is too irresistible for anything, and as it is related to the Deacon's pious plans and affects his humble path of duty, he grants himself dispensation from orders just this once, and indulges every relaxable portion of his face (tersely dubbed "Nubbin

Ridge" by Bill), in one long nectared smile of sugared sanctity.

O! SEE THE DEA-CON SMILE! IS IT NOT NICE TO BE A-BLE TO SMILE LIKE UN-TO THE DEA-CON? YES. THEN BE HO-LY LIKE UN-TO THE DEA-CON, GEN-TLE REA-DER, AND YOU CAN SMILE LIKE THAT YOUR-SELF SOME DAY.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JOKE.

When Mat started off in such an unceremonious fashion at the depot the morning of Miss Hennon's arrival, and Uncle Alec McNeil asked him, in by no means a low tone of voice, if his cutter hadn't come, and emphasized the *cutter,* Male Pike, meaning. of course, the three great divisions of Juvenile, Beardless and Pantalooned Pike, went wild with hilarity. The question was a joke. I don't know whether it should have been so labeled to enable mediocre intellects to grasp it understandingly, but, nevertheless, for fear every one who reads this is not a Sherlock Holmes, I will repeat, *it was a joke.* Male Pike allowed it was the "doggondest joke heerd for a stretch 'roun' thar," and the old heads who had heard jokes before the war, the other war—when everything from jokes to jimson weed was of a much finer quality—declared that Uncle Alec McNeil had simply out-Uncle-Alec-McNeiled himself when he gave utterance to that scintillating shaft.

The hilarious echoes reached the Doyle*ses,* as Petticoated Pike was wont to term plurals, and the Doyle*ses,* as far as Mother Doyle and Betty were concerned, gave a howdy and a speed-the-parting to the hilarious echoes: as far as Mat went—and he went pretty far in his shell—the hilarious echoes received a very glum, shaky welcome, if, indeed, it could be called a welcome at all.

Then the hilarious echoes went dancing on down the

county road and bounded in on one bachelor, yclept Dud Trenome. If Mother Doyle and Betty gave those hilarious echoes a howdy, Dud gave them a regular prodigal son reception. To think of old terrapin Mat jaybirdin' (that was the way Dud put it)—jaybirdin' up the road arm in arm, (Dud imagined the arm in arm),—arm in arm, then, with a befeathered and beribboned, (Dud clung like a bulldog to the feathers and ribbons),—befeathered and beribboned Yankee schoolmarm, whose age was—well, Dud's vivid imagination balked at the age, but the hatchet face and the rasping voice—*they* were there. O! my! Dud brought out the best rocker in his den and told those hilarious echoes to take a chair and stay to dinner, and then he went to the well, ostensibly to draw a bucket of water, but really to stamp, and paw, and twist, and alternately gasp, "Dern my time!" "Old Mat and the school marm—Lord a-mercy!" "Won't I warm him—gosh!" "Pretendin' to go for a cutter! the scamp!"

But the most appreciative reception was that tendered by Deacon Setton Hicks to the hilarious echoes. He locked the door of his office—his office and "deadfall" combined—and, going to the window where his gaze could float upon the atmosphere unobstructed by bad flour and worse "sow belly," he indulged in the pose and smile described above, and ambled gracefully into reminiscences and cogitations set forth below.

Like Homer, the Deacon's initial watering, or milking, place is, as yet, unknown, and consequently, unhonored and unsung; or, at least, not as fully honored and sung as it will be when an all-enlightening millenium shall have disclosed its location. Perchance it has already sent statesmen and warriors—and Congressmen—before the world's footlights to herald its fertility in gray matter, but when it

shall have become known as Setton Hicks' birthplace, then, and then only, will Fame tune her strings to the proper Wagnerian pitch. Unlike Homer, however, there is, to date, no mention of seven cities claiming his cradleship. The Deacon, himself, says, and says emphatically, that he was ushered in at a point considerably more north of Mason and Dixon's line than south; but as I entertain too great a respect, as a Unionist, for any given point in the circumference of our domain (yes, even Taguig!) to name it the *starting* point of the Hick*ses,* I must and will be silent.

One thing positive, the Deacon's entrance into Pike was at a very much later date and in a far different manner than his "first appearance." The Deacon came to Pike when the railroad came—the new road—or thereabouts. He brought with him a little knotty head filled with little knotty schemes, which schemes, when unknotted, were to result in nine parts profit to Hicks and one part profit to Pike, or nine parts loss to Pike and one part loss to Hicks. In short, he came to Pike—like scores of other adventurers have come to scores of other Pikes—to fleece Pike, whether or no. The railroad that had run through, or got through somehow, (legislators and lobbyists can best tell how), distributed oceans of rainbow literature lauding Pike throughout the East, which literature made it clear to the Hicks tribe that the immense pine tracts were put in Pike by a kind Providence for no other purpose than the enriching of the Hick*ses.* Thereupon, the Hick*ses* "jumped" as many debts as they could contract up North, and then jumped aboard the new road, and, before Pike realized it, Pike had received a choice sample of Eastern Capital and Eastern Progress, about which our Southern Supreme Courts are so solicitous in their construction of anti-trust measures.

This particular shining member of the Hick*ses*, to wit, Setton Hicks, landed on all fours in this particular Pike, and ere long the hum, and buzz, and whirr, and puff of the sawmill played a ceaseless serenade to the erstwhile pensive Pike 'possum. So far so good!

Setton Hicks hired Pantalooned Pike and Pantalooned Pike chopped, and sawed, and "snaked" in quite a prodigious manner for Setton Hicks, on quite prodigious wages. Setton Hicks incidentally laid out Pike—not pugilistically speaking, but municipally. Town lots, streets, alleys, sidewalks, and the inevitable railroad-backwater-town "Front Street," superseded coon hunts, barbecues—and other frontier gossip, and Pantalooned Pike allowed that Setton Hicks was a "fust-rate man," and continued to chop away right royally for Setton Hicks and—PROGRESS. Setton Hicks and—PROGRESS were shortly carving into those pine tracts with the vigor of a watermelon darkey, and "two b' fours," and "one b' twelves," and "dimension stuff," and "sidin' " became household phrases where "taller" and "hum'spun" had reigned supreme. Verily, verily P was beginning to stand for Pike as well as PROGRESS! Meanwhile, the new road, being the only road, charged Setton Hicks in a manner quite scandalous for freight rates.

Meanwhile, those pine tracts, once the crust was broken into, began to develop a great deal of "culls" in a great deal of swamp.

Meanwhile, Seton Hicks evolved a plan which didn't need much evolving, inasmuch as he had already brought it down South with him, and which was simply to cut all the pine he could, in as few years as he could, pay as little as he could, and then bid adieu to Pike, and bundle himself and his PROGRESS off to uncut tracts. He thereupon began to lower his prices on buying, and imported a slick,

sleek timberman to estimate timber according to Hicks. Gradually Pantalooned Pike began to discover that their lands, tenements and hereditaments weren't yielding as much pine per acre as formerly, and with the discovery came its twin brother—"decline in the Eastern market." The Hick*ses* have always employed that phrase advantageously at critical junctures, and Setton found it as valuable as it had ever been and ever will be. He told Pantalooned Pike that his shipments were netting very little East *now,* and that as most of their pine, *now,* was, according to his slick, sleek timberman, gnarled, and below gauge, he must drop his wages until the East advanced, and their tracts improved. contemporaneously, he introduced the "deadfall," which is the only non-patented invention that enjoys a permanent copyright on extortion. Prior to the "deadfall" Pantalooned Pike were free to trade where they pleased, but with its advent, came a Hicks currency denominated "white-back," good in exchange at the "deadfall" for provisions. Setton Hicks didn't say to Pantalooned Pike, "Here, I've stocked a room full of cheap, unwholesome truck, and you *must* buy from me or lose your jobs." No, gentle reader, he didn't say so, but he did like the conscripting officer, who said: "Well, it's a free country, be drafted or shot, just as you please"; he made an example of one or two Pike-ites who requested a hundred per cent. cash equivalent for their white-back. After that, the "deadfall" ground out its mission of giving poor food for good work until, in the logical degeneration of things, its grinding had ground the work to as poor a quality as the food. In justice to Setton, I must insist that Pantalooned Pike was not forced to this; the white-back could always be cashed at the office—office and "deadfall"—for from sixty-two to sixty-eight cents on the dollar, and if Pantalooned

Pike chose rather to take goods (*bads* would ring truer), instead of cash, Pantalooned Pike was free so to do. During the evolution of this Hicksonian plan, some other gentry of the Capital and Progress school scented Pike, and almost simultaneous with the white-back came the saloons—dingy, miserable shacks, constructed out of Hicksonian refuse lumber, where liquefied hell, in its most devilishly doped and damnably drugged garb, was dispensed to Pike—Juvenile, Beardless and Pantalooned Pike, indiscriminately. These gentry, having beforehand figured that twenty cents' worth of navy tobacco and dried peaches boiled and retailed at one dollar in white-back—cashable at from sixty-two to sixty-eight cents—was a three-hundred-per-cent. investment and over, thrived, and thrived to such a woeful extent that not only did Pike labor sink into a dreggy, drunken, shiftless slough, but the "deadfall's" receipts began to dwindle at an alarming pace. Setton tied up and undid those knotty schemes in his head to devise a check for the gentry. He had much rather give a sack of black flour than sixty-two to sixty-eight cents for white-back; but, as things went on, the gentry were unloading tons of white-back on him. Pantalooned Pike seemed to have changed its diet of sow-belly to fusil oil, and the fate of the "deadfall" hung in future's vista, a dreadful Gibraltar to Hicksonian Progress. So, after a deal of knotting and unknotting, Setton sent East for some more scions of the house of Hicks, males and females, and before their tracks to Pike had congealed, the gentry had an anti-saloon war on hand that proved much more unwieldly and unprofitable than the white-back.

It was at that stage of affairs that negro labor, following the general craze of saw-milling, left "ole mammy an' pappy" to steer the plow, and hied them to Pike, and—

PROGRESS. Setton discerned the profit to be accrued from their employment, inasmuch as they could stand cattle work and cattle food, and, making them acquainted at the outset with the fact that he was one of their emancipators, and, consequently, guides, philosophers and friends, he soon had the voting strength of Pike successfully diluted with Sambos and Hick*ses*. The discomfiture and rout of the whisky gentry followed, of course, in early season, and once more Setton and the "deadfall" wore an expectant air. He laid in an extra stock of a shade worse flour, two shades worse meat, and three shades worse parched peas for coffee, and began to put his wards, the colored gentlemen, through a course of Hicksonian Progress, that would have finally accomplished the end of all Hicksonian Progress, had it not been nipped.

Hicksonian Progress is opium-like in its effects. Its victims, who whiff its balmy odors once, are forever after done for, and, as Pantalooned Pike had been dosed with a pretty strong whiff, they clamored for more white-back, more deadfall, more logging, more anything, to bring a scant Saturday pay-day and a rioting Saturday night's gambling debauch—something Homespun Pike had never dreamt of in the good, sturdy old days of harvest moons and husking bees. Setton turned a deaf ear at first to the clamoring, but as his Hicks importations were on a level with him for business acumen, and proved very unsatisfactory white-backers; and as Sambo began to sniff the city from afar, and catch in the aeolian breezes from its slums and scums alluring echoes of the white man's virtue, and drift by ones and twos to the Capitol, Setton came round with the magnanimity so characteristic of all the Hick*ses*, and reinstated Pantalooned Pike. Nay, he did more. He insinuated the female scions of the house of Hicks into

Petticoated Pike's piety, contributed lumber galore for new churches, and blossomed out in the glorious hue of Deacon. His fox-like cunning saw the immense advantage to be secured by corraling the hysterical religion of Petticoated Pike and playing sweet psalms of Profit and Progress in revivals, and he worked upon that hysterical religion, and cut, and twisted, and fashioned it with all the thrift of a housewife recasting pa's sometime breeches.

Throughout, Setton kept steadily in mind the Hicksonian legend: "Fleece 'em and leave 'em," and he longed for the time to arrive when he should have sucked as much blood as possible from Pike and returned to Hicksville. All the machinery he had bought was "on time," and by the "smooth and oily art to speak and purpose not," he paid a penny now and then, and obtained extension after extension from his creditors. This refutes the charge that the Hick*ses* are sectional in their fleecing, for Setton's creditors were in Yankeedom, and Setton had them notched on his shears, cheek by cheek, with Pike and Dixie-dom. Yes, sir; it not only refutes the charge of sectionalism, but establishes the irrefutable fact that Hicks-ism, wherever its origin, location and destination, has for its court of arms a pair of shears rampant, a leech dormant, on a field of hypocrisy and fraud. You can take it as a matter of undeniable truth, that whatever reads Profit to Hicks, by a simple application of acrostics, spells Loss to the other fellow. The North, the East, and the West have, no doubt, their Hick*ses,* but as I write not beyond my ken, I *know* the South has, and whenever I hear a Hicks unburden himself on Sambo and Judge Lynch, I see Mr. Leech dormant become Mr. Leech couchant; but I anticipate. To the rear, then, anticipations, and let us resume our survey of this individual Hicks, and his joke.

Bobby Burns, so revered by the Scots—who waited, by the bye, until he was in a ragged grave to show their reverence—has said that the best-laid plans of mice and men, (and other vermin), gang aft aglee. The Hick*ses*, then, wise and all-seeing as they are, cannot expect exemption from the adage, and upon our Hicks, our own dear, Deacon Hicks, falls, at the opening of this tale, the harsh burden of illustration. The general craze for sawmills had brought, in its train of blessings, low prices for lumber, and, in the decline, many a Hicks learned that all grapes are not sweet. The Deacon's first year in Pike looked rosy; the second, sunflowery; the third saw its apex: then came the toboggan, and two b'heavies went down, down, until the quotations were intensely sombre. Setton's creditors hadn't sold him machinery on any two b'heavy contingency, and they suggested from time to time that settlements for boilers, planers, gang-saws, and what not, were overdue and "waitin' on him." White-back was an excellent medium in Pike to sap perseverance out of Pike-dom, but it had no standing elsewhere, and so Setton's creditors hammered away until, little as Pike thought it, the sawmill tottered before repeated duns. The Deacon's head, small as it was, was generously stuffed with eel-like, knotty schemes that had enabled him to squirm out of many a squeeze of yore, and he held repeated consultations with himself and Progress as to how to still pluck his quota of wool from the burs. He could expect nothing from the other Hick*ses*, for they were all behind, more or less, in their shearing, and, at best, were an ungenerous set of houn—— Hick*ses*. He could expect nothing much from lumber until it should have become too late to employ it for any other purpose than repairing his mansions in the sky. He had made his "deadfall" as remunerative as it

was possible to make it, without absolutely giving his hands poison, and still he was like the little boy, who, upon inquiring, "Bah, bah, black sheep, have you any wool?" was informed that while the black sheep had three bags full, there was none for the little boy who cried in the lane.

Along about that very discouraging stage, Mat Doyle reached and passed the mile-post of legal discretion. Mat Doyle, from a hard-working, unobtrusive, Christian lad, had grown up into the same sort of a man. He had never boarded the band-wagon of Hicksonian Progress, but had stuck to old Beck—followed her up one furrow and down another, in and out, day after day, until, having reached maturity, he was able to let a few, hard-working tenants divide his labor, and indulge himself in reading spells that, while not as exciting as Saturday-night gambling sprees, were infinitely of more benefit. Mat Doyle was no "mommer's boy," however; don't think it! He was as free from any milk-and-toast taint as the Ott outfit were free from real manhood, and though a recluse amongst the women, and a quiet comrade amongst all the men, except his life-long friend Dud, he enjoyed the world and its contents as well and as sensibly as any self-reliant, healthy-minded gentleman could.

Mat was a factor in Pike, young as he was. Not a political factor, for he looked on politics as so much jockeyism. Neither a religious factor, for he simply lived Christ instead of shouting and screeching Him. Nor a Progressive factor, for he managed the income and outgo of the Doyle farm on a very unprogressive basis, to wit, *cash* both ways. But he was just a plain factor, unique to Pike in his thrift, and dear to Pike in his probity. When he sat on the jury neither Bench nor Bar asked him the usual stereotyped questions; they accepted him, and wished men-

tally that the other eleven were like him. When, as was very seldom the case, he entered the witness-box, he was not sworn, for some lawyer was sure to rise and move that the formality be dispensed with in Mat's case. Such a record at twenty-five is, indeed, enviable—enviable at any age; but there are more Mat Doyles than one amongst us. After we have done fawning on Hicksonian Progress, we will find them out and discover that, like good wine, they have improved with the keeping. It may not be inappropriate to suggest, in passing, that we quit our nonsensical fawning and find the Doyle*ses* out before there is not enough timber left to build them a shack.

Our friend, the Deacon, had not held many consultations with himself and Progress before Mat became a factor there, too.

It has been remarked that the definition of a farm in Dixie is "a body of land entirely covered by a mortgage." The Doyle farm was the rule-proving exception. It was not only free from debt, but had, of recent years, carried a modest insurance, for Mat considered that a place worth calling "home" was well worth insuring. Towards Mat's home the Deacon's shears turned with the precision of a compass-needle, and forthwith the Deacon began to whet the edges of the shears, and forthwith Mr. Leech (now couchant), took a firmer grip on the field of hyprocrisy and fraud. Mat must be cultivated, and Setton wisely kenned that a man who had sense enough to maintain an insured farm must be cultivated with hot-house delicacy.

Therefore, the Deacon, best of all, discerns and enjoys the joke.

When he railroaded Miss Hennon in on Pike he did so simply because she underbid the rest, and with careful

Hicksonian manipulation, the five dollars difference between her bid and the next highest could find a permanent lodging in the sawmill safe on various accounts of school furniture, charts, and so forth. But when Mother Doyle came in suddenly upon him with an inquiry as to Miss Hennon's address, and inadvertently let fall *her* little plan, the holy man instantly thought of *his* little plan, and followed up Mother Doyle's letter with one eulogistic of the Doyles, from Mother Doyle to old Ball, the hunter. The result was Miss Hennon in person—unexpected. Pike allowed that Mat, for the first time in his life, veered from the truth about coming to meet that cutter, and, my, my, *my,* how the good Deacon enjoyed the joke. Aside from its being just an everyday joke, you and I may not see any reason to split our sides over it, but the Deacon, oh, my! He really couldn't contain himself—the *point* of the joke was so exceedingly keen. Some of us may in time see the point also, but, at present, neither Pike, nor you, or I, can enjoy it with the zest of our meek friend. He was so wrapped up in its blissful contemplation that he failed to observe the village preacher advancing towards the office. When he did so, he hastily jumped to his desk, and in a jiffy was poring over the open pages of his Bible, and when the parson tried the knob, Hicks, stifling a last chuckle, unlocked the door and said, meekly:

"Come in, parson; was just preparing to close up for —day, and continue—chapter at—sanctuary."

The Deacon boarded in the parsonage — kept "bach," as we unholy scamps would say—though he always applied the more fitting term of "sanctuary" to his apartments.

"Yes, parson," he continued, (he always bit and chewed his words mightily, and seemed, like stenographers, to

have discarded articles and pronouns), "when—Spirit moves me—these times—feel out of place in—busy mart —wish to seek seclusion with—Book."

The parson glanced at the Book and saw it was open at the Sermon on the Mount. If he could have discerned the point of that joke with the Deacon's relish, he would have possibly felt staggered at the proximity of *that* sermon to *that* joke.

CHAPTER IX.

"PEDRO."

IT GRIEVES me sincerely to descend from the lowly Deacon to "Pedro"; yet I am logical or nothing, and the descent must be made: it follows as naturally as reaching the ground by the easy and acrobatic feat of tumbling from a log. "Pedro" is as much a product, effect, result of Hicksism—political and commercial Hicksism—as bad odors are of filth, or malaria, or stagnation, or maggots of decay, or any other noxious germination of a fetid growth. If political and commercial Hicksism had never tampered with Sambo, this chapter on "Pedro," and, in fact, this tale of Judge Lynch, would have never been inflicted on a proverbially patient public. Judge Lynch would have held court so seldom as not to even warrant a Whittier poetic outburst, much less a Ward-Howe eruption, and the "bad negro," so far from being a fixture, and, I fear, a perpetual plague, would have been nigh as great a rarity as a setting of ostrich eggs—would have merely been an occasionally inevitable, but not necessarily dangerous, obstacle in the path of a fast-improving race.

"Pedro" once had a Christian name and a civilized surname, but as he has so long been known in Pike, on the railroad, in the city, before the police judges, and on the rock pile, as "Pedro," his original cognomen would necessitate an unabridged index whenever used before his acquaintances; and as I am not writing for those pro-

vincial folks, who were born, raised and warped in one township, and one set of ideas, "Pedro" will be readily recognized.

"Pedro's" first peep at daylight was through the chinks of an humble cabin—plantation cabin—some twenty miles from Pike, or, to be exact, twenty miles from the site of future Pike, for reconstruction had not then brought its reorganization of post-offices and consequent influx of Hicksonian postmasters.

"Pedro's" first squawk was indicative of another substantial item to marster's assets. "Pedro's" first medical attention resulted in the (private) announcement to marster, that if he lived through March he would be a valuable slave, as he had some mulatto in him—this, notwithstanding the fact that "Pedro's" mammy and pappy were decided—very—Ethiopianic brunettes.

"Pedro" did live through March—in fact, several of them—when of a sudden, so it seemed to "Pedro" and the other pickaninnies, whose geographical knowledge stopped at marster's landing, marster and young marster rode down the wide drive in dazzling gray clothes, boots shining with "b'ars ile," and powerful long swords clinking and clashing. From that date "Pedro" existed through some very checkered years—a quartet of them—in which he and mammy and pappy were not infrequently the checkers. Trying times came over the plantation, and often and often, especially along towards the last, "Pedro's" mammy and pappy, and "Pedro" himself, saw times more trying in their humble sphere than did missus and the little missuses up at the great house. Before the dazzling gray clothes and all that, mammy and pappy and "Pedro" never knew what sleeping on an empty stomach felt like, but afterwards many and many the

night that "Pedro" piled abed hungry. Did he cry? Complain? Regret? Repine? Sulk? Sniffle? Mouth? Murmur? *Not he.* He hadn't lost his Christian name and civilized surname then, and so, when mammy tucked him away supperless, and then knelt down and prayed in her poor, uneducated way for marster's and young marster's safe return, and prayed for pappy, who was on guard out on the turnpike, protecting missus and the little missuses, and prayed that missus and the little missuses might never go to bed hungry, "Pedro" knew that the supper that used to be his had gone to help out its mite up at the great house. Then, indeed, would a tear glisten tremblingly and drop from "Pedro's" round, wide-open eyes, but it was no tear of complaint; no, no, my unconverted friend, it was a tear of poor, slavish, uneducated happiness to know that his mite of a supper could help the "dear missus" and the "lubly li'l missuses"; as honest a tear as ever was shed, cross or no cross, Christ or no Christ, soul or no soul! How could it be other than honest? "Pedro," in his short pickaninny career, had never heard mammy and pappy mention marster as other than the one who fed, clothed and protected them; furnished them medicine; built them a meeting house; brought them their share of good things from New Orleans; and, greatest of all, turned the plantation over to them from Christmas eve to New Year's Day, inclusive and beyond. Naturally enough, therefore, did "Pedro" follow mammy and pappy's example in those supperless days, and show that gratitude was not indigenous to white soil, and that cotton eyes had their tear springs behind them to enrich that black soil of gratefulness.

Time and time again were mammy and pappy and "Pedro" bundled off by blue clothes and bundled back by

gray clothes, and throughout it all their uppermost thoughts and best endeavors were for missus and the little missuses' weal.

That in sixty. Now what? *"Huh!"* as Mat Doyle would emphasize.

I read scarce a year ago—yea, even in the year of war for humanity's sake—that now our white women in Dixie were not safe beyond the range of their men folks' Winchesters, and I thought, "Great God! can this be true—can it be even barely true!" To think of those awful days of sixty, when the poor, uneducated black slave held the gun in his hands for our white women's protection—the very gun his marster's laws had forbidden him ownership of in time of peace. To think of little "Pedro's" supper carried up to the great house by the loving hands of mammy—God bless her! I've nursed at her breast—and then to read that every black man stands to-day a black brute, a pall over the lives he once protected. Can it be so? No, 'tis not as bad by half as the writer of that exaggeration would have us believe, but who can say how long before it shall have become a stubborn, awful fact? Who can say? Hicksism, bigotry and intolerance have hastened its maturity, even as the quick growth of the toad-stool; but will Hicksism, bigotry and intolerance survive *their* toad-stool like longevity? (Pardon the bull). Will they cling on and sap, and sap, and sap until what intolerance is pleased to call a "problem" ceases by the snuffing solution? An Aedepus for an answer.

But "Pedro," meanwhile? Well, we'll continue, and not "progress" any more, as Dooley would opine, and please to bear in mind, as *I* opine, that I am not tapping my imaginative tank to present "Pedro" on this canvas—not by a jugfull. If anything, I will be partial to "Pedro"

in his degenerating developments, because, for the life of me, try as I will, (for present purposes), I can't forget the time his mammy and pappy held their tireless and supperless vigils for *our* mammies and pappies—peace and eternal happiness to all of them. So "Pedro," then.

Marster and young marster came back at last, no longer marster and young marster—Appomattox had stricken the title from liberty's vocabulary. Yes, they came back—afoot; fine horses long since gone: Yes, they came back—boots muddy, cracked and worn; "bar's ile" long since gone: Yes, they came back—ragged: ragged, did I say? Pretty nigh it; dazzling gray clothes bespattered by the tearing tempests of war's elements; brass buttons, fine sashes, buckskin gauntlets long since gone: Yes, they came back to fields sown in blood and plowed by shell, and reaped with the rake of a lurid hell; to homes that now stood, sorrow to tell—a toll from the roll of a fun'ral bell: Yes, they came back, weary as only the wrecked, dreary as only the defeated can be, and they pushed open the big gate, now rotting, and they walked up the wide drive, now weed-grown, and they came, footsore and heartsick, before the portals of the great house, now gaunt—and there, surrounding missus and the little missuses, grouped about all they loved best on earth, were old Dinah, Aunt Hannah, Tilda, Uncle Lige, Gabe, Eef, Big John, Little John, and Mammy, and Pappy, and cotton-eyed "Pedro" peeping out from behid mammy's skirt. Take away! Take away your Reubens', your Raphaels', your Rembrandts', your Millais', your Angelo's—take them all away! Take away your rich gilt frames, with their costly carved oak leaves and flutings—take them all away! Carry me back to that picture of what was once marster and young marster, missus and the little missuses in loving embrace,

and the frame that encased it! "The boast of heraldry and the pomp of power" no longer dazzled the uniforms and burnished the swords of marster and young marster; the glare of ballrooms and the glitter of chandeliers no longer wooed the velvet blush on missus' and the little missuses' cheeks; but in that frame beat hearts as true as any steel and stout as any oak; and, though now Magnanimity had said: "Let us have peace," and thereby that group were freed—men, yet they were more—they were friends!

But time and tide go on in seconds and minutes, as well as years and centuries, and marster cleared his throat and bid the lips that had stiffened at Shiloh, be firm. Black hands were thrust forward and grasped; howdy after howdy broke the sobs of missus and the little missuses, and, at last welled up the words: "God bless yoo, marster, we'll neber leab yoo."

"Friends," he responded, thickly, raising his hand gently for attention; "friends, don't call me marster any longer. The war is over. You are free—free to go as citizens. All I have is swept away; not even the ground I stand upon is mine. The cabins you sleep in are no more mine than yours. I must go to work for my family, and, though we would keep each and every one of you with us if we could, we can't do it. We have nothing to give you: we have nothing for ourselves, and to keep you with us would invite starvation upon us all. The world lies before you, as it does before us; we must go out into it alike. Rest assured, all of you, that though we must go our separate ways, and say good-by for to-day—rest assured, my friends, that whenever I have a meal's victuals for my loved ones, you will not go hungry. We must all make

good citizens—you the same as I; you bury your shackles, I my sword, and we take up the plow, each for himself."

Thus they parted, both to look anew a problem in the face; both free and equal before the law; both poor; both at sea; *both friends.* A bad situation, true enough, and not so bad, true enough, and the last two words, *both friends,* were the saving clause. *Both friends.* Study it a moment. *Both friends.* Ponder it a moment. *Both friends.* Lay down this page a moment,—Judge Lynch can adjourn court while you consider it.

What would two sets of people on a perfectly friendly basis have done with such a problem if left to themselves? *Solve it,* or friendship is not the omnipotent exotic I take it to be. Solve it unconditionally. But it is idle to speculate on what might have been done, and irrelevant to "Pedro," inasmuch as we have to deal with what *was* done, *is* done (but I trust not, shall ever be done, Amen!).

The group dispersed. Marster's folks went to the city, marster to renew acquaintance with his profession, from which years of luxury had estranged him. Then there appeared in the horizon a speck. Like all other incipient storm-clouds, it was small—no larger than a carpet-bag; and, in fact, as its proportions became defined, it *was* a carpet-bag. Like all other evil storm-clouds, it quickly gathered other carpet-bags, until the South was like unto a plague-stricken Egypt. A land but lately bayonet-ridden was now carpet-bag deluged, and the latter will be by far the worst calamity. Hicksism was a condition. The highways and byways, and all the other ways, were infested with gentry who, not being able to accumulate more than a carpet-bag full of chattels North, were obviously competent to do so South.

Then, indeed, did the freedman hear some truths. Then,

indeed, did political Hicksism show him what should be his true status, *i. e.,* a recumbent attitude upon a hundred-dollar sofa in the bankrupt state's capitol. Then, indeed, were marster's folks held up to him as his worst and most implacable enemies. Then, indeed, was it demonstrated to him that Nature had accomplished for the Ethiopian by a partisan vote what she hasn't yet completed for the Caucasian by evolution. Then, indeed, did his new-found mentors whisper boss in his ear, ballot in his skull, and bullet in his heart. What happened? When power is the highest aim of the white man's game; when *we* fall every day, prone and prostrate before the gewgaws of garishness, is it inexplicable that "Pedro's" people wavered?

Is it contrary to mathematics that an addition of two and two will result in the sum of four? Well, "Pedro" is helping his little mite to produce the resultant sum—helping for woe just as his supper used to help for weal; and Hicksism can thank itself and its teachings that hemp is being used, perforce, as a counter irritant.

After the carpet-bags had permeated the erstwhile poor but placid problem, "Pedro" began to absorb the imported doctrine with sponge-like avidity. "Pedro" being by genus imitative, was correlatively absorbent. He scampered into the city—not with any idea of working, for Hicksism had told him that, as a ward of the nation, he needn't work. Consequently, he neglected the faculties necessary to industry and improved those essential to idleness.

He was young then, and bright, too; quick to see and quicker to note. He saw that marster no longer went down into a well-filled wallet—carpet-bags were fat instead. He swung to the latter. "Pedro" experienced

some halcyon years thereabouts. Vice was unrolled and displayed before him in garbs, and shapes, and patterns that would turn a much paler lad, let alone one of "Pedro's" hue. Virtue was as undisplayable as marster's lean wallet; vice as full of promise as the carpet-bags. He swung to the latter.

Chopping weeds in the cotton was hot work in the sun; rolling dice in the warehouse was lucrative sport in the shade. He swung to the latter. "Totin" wood to the kitchen was mighty poor fun by the side of seven-up behind a cotton bale. He swung to the latter. And so on down the list. At ten, as a "kid," "Pedro" knew the safest corners of all the warehouses. At fifteen, as a bootblack, he knew which bar-rooms did the biggest business. At twenty, as a procurer, he knew exactly where to locate the best-looking yellow girls. At twenty-five, as a roustabout, he knew every pilot on the river and every engineer on the road. At thirty, as a jailbird, he knew every chain-gang from St. Louis to New Orleans, and at thirty-five, as a vagabond, we find him in Pike, (his stand-by haunt during a blow-over), an adept in every black art, and a stranger to the rudimentary elements of human decency. Long years of vice have made him a villain: long years of rascality, a rogue: long years of dissipation, a drunkard: long years of white vice example, a menace to female virtue, and long and notorious proficiency in a game known as "Cinch," "Fifty-two," "Set-back," "High Five," but most commonly, "Pedro," has given him a soubriquet that carries with it a kaleidoscope of deviltry.

Thus "Pedro." He has been sojourning in Pike some twelve months, having suddenly left St. Louis a year before, and he will sojourn in Pike until luck, love or

laxity lure him citywards. Meanwhile, Bill Ott, Andy Dodd and Company will acquire all of "Pedro's" latest points on pasteboards, and, perchance, acquire a moiety of the cash which caused that gentleman's abrupt abandonment of the Missouri metropolis .

CHAPTER X.

JUDGE LYNCH AS A THEORY.

"Big Lynchin' in Clay County," remarked Uncle Alec McNeil, glancing over his specs and holding his newspaper nearer the lamp.

They were all sitting around on counters, kegs and cracker-boxes in Uncle Alec McNeil's one evening late in the fall. When I say they, Pantalooned Pike is, of course, meant, to wit, that male portion of Pike who have nothing to do but improve their conversational accomplishments. To these may be added the mill hands—Setton Hicks' mill hands, and the mill hands from across the mountain, the evening being Saturday. Included, also, were Mat Doyle and Dud Trenome. Dud had come in for some small trading and had stopped by Mat's (stopped *by*, not *in*)—had left his pony there, and the two had footed it down. Lastly, Deacon Hicks had just stepped in for a package of oatmeal, when Uncle Alec McNeil made the above remark.

So it may truthfully be said that Uncle Alec McNeil had a large and distinguished audience, and there was nothing in the wide world that tickled the old merchant more. While we are aware, from his own confidential statement to "Dear," that his educational abilities barely permitted him to sign his name and read it, yet that was no bar whatever to his dispensing the news. All he needed were good sensational headlines, and he could

improvise the rest, and, inasmuch as his listeners during working hours and between trains, were Pantalooned Pike, it didn't matter much whether his improvisations were grammatically, orthographically, or historically correct or not; he would pore over his paper and give the items out in as fantastically worded a garb as a magazine poet would wish. Meanwhile, those of Pantalooned Pike who weren't filching sundry articles of commerce, lounged in a semi-somnolent state, and all was well.

You are not to presume, however, that on such occasions Uncle Alec McNeil was the least bit unconscious of the filching. He noted every piece of tobacco or candy, every can of sardines, every nail that was taken, and also noted the taker, and you may be sure that in the end Uncle Alec McNeil wasn't the loser. A good many storekeepers prefer to raise a fuss over such things, and thereby lose trade, for it is a self-evident axiom, that if you catch a fellow red-handed and then hurt his feelings, he'll quit trading with you. Uncle Alec McNeil believed in catching them red-handed, or in any other feasible fashion, but he respected their feelings, and went at their pocketbooks in future dealings; or, if they didn't have any pocketbooks to go at, he went after others who did, and in a quiet way evened it up nicely.

Frequently Mother Doyle had had to pay for a piece of "star" which one of the Ott's had surreptitiously slipped in his shirt bosom the day before; but so long as Mother Doyle was ignorant of it, she wasn't hurt. Uncle Alec McNeil got his pay for the "star" and he wasn't hurt; and the filching Ott got the "star" and he wasn't hurt; and I'm confident that however much moralists may differ from Uncle Alec McNeil on the ethics of the transaction,

arithmeticians will be unanimous that the rule of three couldn't have worked it better.

Uncle Alec McNeil was always immensely intent on his paper during these readings, both to give the filcher full swing and to impress those who were too lazy to filch, with his erudition. The evening in question was extraordinarily propitious in both respects. The crowd was large, and Mat, Dud and Hicks were present—Pike's triumvirate of scholars.

"Yes, sir, big lynchin', in Clay—my, my!" and that's as far as Uncle Alec McNeil ventured. He was entirely too politic to take a stand on anything susceptible of a division, which, of course, didn't include the absurdly, ridiculously low prices of his merchandise. His "my, my!" might have meant "my, my! how terrible!" or, "my, my! how glorious!" for all any one could tell. The look on his face, the inflection of his voice, were just as unenlightening as the monosyllables he uttered, so the crowd waited for particulars.

"Big lynchin' in Clay—my——"

"Uncle Alec McNeil, you said that before. Less hear the balance; must er been a *h—l* of a big lynchin' to call it over three times."

Everybody except Hicks and Mat roared at Wicked Bill's sally. Hicks scowled; Mat didn't.

"Well, sir; well, sir, um—lessee," mused Uncle Alec McNeil running his eye up and down the whole length of the paper, though, in fact, the article was scarcely a quarter-column.

"Lessee: Big lynchin'—I believe you said you'd heard that once before, Bill."

Everybody roared again, and the filchin got in a little

side work, while Uncle Alec McNeil, though ostensibly doubled up with mirth, took copious mental notes thereon.

"Yee, hee!" he panted, finally untying himself and wiping his specs; "Well, we'll try it agin. 'Scuse me, Bill —I—I—I didn't know you were in here; 'clare to goodness I jes happened to look up an' see you, an' I—I—I jes thought, Billy, you'd like to hear it—hee, hey, ha, ha, ha! yee, ha, ha, ha!" and once more the roaring began, with Uncle Alec McNeil far in the van and apparently in a fair way to choke himself to death.

"Whee, hey!" he panted, once more untwisting himself and shaking the paper out, "hee-ay, now boys, less get at it; an' listen right close, Billy, I don't want to have to read it over agin: 'Clay County, the scene of a bloody tra*degy*—*E*emmense mob lynches a friend—no, fiend—um, hum. Smithton, November twentieth: A nigger named Mose Jones assaulted Mrs. John Delanny—how do you call that, Mat, Delanny or De*lan*ey—well, we'll jes let it go either way—assaulted Mrs. Delanny last night, and immejiately fleed the—the——"

"Coop," suggested Bill.

"Yes, coop'll do. A mob soon gathered in hot pursuit and, um—in hot pursuit, an' they caught Mose 'long t'rds nine o'clock, an' strung him up. Great excitement *pree*vails, an' the sheriff is a-summonin' a—a—poss." All of which, though not quite the wording of the article, was the gist.

"Sheriff gatherin' a what?" Dud asked, mischievously.

"Why, a crowd o' men," quickly answered Uncle Alec McNeil, who wasn't to be caught on posse.

"What the h—l does he want with 'em? They done caught the nigger," commented Wicked Bill.

"Wants 'em to preserve order, Billy; to preserve order.

The paper says there's great excitement. Great excitement *pree*vails," the old man quoted.

"Where was the sheriff when Mose went up?" Dud inquired, midst a general laugh.

"It don't say, my son, it don't say; as it wasn't anywhere near *primary* time I sca'cely reckon he was about."

"Oh, he'll be thar at the inquest," declared Bill.

"Inquest!" echoed Andy, who *would* take Bill seriously; "inquest over a dam dead nigger?"

"Why, sir, if truth was known, sir, which 't isn't in these parts," snapped Hicks, "sheriff'd be found with mob—that's where *he* was, sir, yes, sir; that's precisely where *he* was, sir, helping break law," and Hicks turned completely around, looking out of his sore eyes at each individual member of the crowd, with the self-satisfied knowledge of a man having unimpeached evidence that the sheriff was one of the mob, if, indeed, not the leader.

"Well, Deacon," ventured Dud, a trifle warmly, "if he *was* with the mob, what of it?"

"What of it, sir; what of it! *Considerably* of it, sir, *considerably* of it! That's what of it, sir, *that's* what of it! Sheriff supposed to maintain law, sir, eh, sir, eh, isn't he, sir; *isn't* he, now?"

"Yes," replied Dud, a trifle more warmly, "and if he's half a man he's not only supposed to, but he's *going* to help vindicate outraged virtue."

"Law does that, sir," testily answered the righteous man; "or, at least, does in *civilized* communities: down here they let mob do it—turn it over to—to cowards, afraid to commit murder unless in crowds—posses, as you miscall them."

"If 'tain't civilized, what air you a-stayin' here fur,

Deecon?" inquired Wicked Bill, and Andy Dodd put in, *sotto voce.*

"Why, to skin us d—n fools, that's what for."

Everybody down in the Ott end of the store guffawed at that shot, which made Hicks first red in the face and then purple, because he didn't know at what they were laughing. He knew, of course, it was some ribald, unholy joke, so to counteract its effect, he charged back to the topic in hand and snapped out:

"No use arguing, not a particle, not a particle, gentlemen; when sheriffs and citizens regard pernicious practice lynching in light of pleasing diversion, past mending, gentlemen, past mending."

At the sentiment "no use arguing," Mat commenced to audibly bristle. Things were decidedly past mending—way past it with Mat, when arguing ceased availability—but it never ceased. It was with Mat in that respect as it was with the fellow who said if they had one bottle the night before they had a hundred—but they never had the one.

"True, Deacon," put in our friend Doyle, "that's *very* true. Things *are* past mendin'—away, over and beyond mendin' on any subject when it's no use arguin'—but it ain't never 'no use arguin';' why, where would our Christian religion be to-day if we hadn't argued our way through eighteen centuries? Arguin' is a heap better remedy than fightin'."

"Gimme the fightin'," said Bill, aside; "if my Winchester works all right, I'll remedy the other feller or salivate him, one; fightin's like calomel when it comes to remedyin'."

Hicks' manner softened noticeably as he turned from

Trenome to Mat (ignoring Wicked Bill's sinful utterance), and replied:

"Yes, Mat; but how can you argue with madmen or mob? Can't do it, Mat; can't do it; *they* don't wish argument, brother; murder is what they're after, murder —yes, sir, murder."

Mat looked stoutly incredulous at the idea of him not being able to argue with a madman or a mob, or, if necessary, both combined; or, for the matter of that, a plurality of combinations, and Dud gave decisive voice to the look by saying:

"Oh, pshaw! Mat's like some women-folks I've heard of —he'd tackle anything in pants."

"Lord bless your time, Dudley," exclaimed Uncle Alec McNeil, "he—he—he's got clear beyond pants; he—he's gone to tacklin' them air, what do you call 'em—oh, yes, *cutters!* hee! hee! he! ha! ha! ha! hea! hea! hea! *heay!*"

Mat tried his best to break into the guffawing.

"Confound it!—wouldn't they ever get something new," he thought, but it was no use, even the good Deacon's Scriptural profile relaxed some of its orthodoxy (though *he* still kept in mind the point of the joke, and was, therefore, excusable).

When an opening did finally occur, Mat said, with great unction and impressively scorning Dud, who was still convulsed over the cutter:

"As we were sayin', gentlemen, nothin's ever past arguin', *'cept foolishness* (emphasis for Dud's benefit). Lynchin', as bad as it is, ain't incurable, and argument is the very thing that'll stop it—cool, dispassionate arg——"

Dud straightened up with an easy jerk and said, good-naturedly—his gorge only rose at the lowly man:

"Oh, come off, Mat! *'cool, dispassionate* argument!'

There's no need of *any* argument; the sun shines—what's the use of arguin'; lynchin' is a patent fact, and a just one, so there you are. Because it ain't down in the statutes don't signify it ain't right, any more than it signifies that every law in the books *is* right."

"I grant it's a patent fact, Dud; but patents run out, you know," Mat essayed adroitly, and Dud instantly rejoined:

"Patents on vengeance never do!"

Mat caught him equally as quick. Keen hand that he was in debates, all he wanted was a willing fish—he guaranteed palatable, but mighty dangerous, bait.

"Vengeance," he echoed, "yes, that's the keynote of you fellows' defense. But vengeance ain't what we're after, the law don't take cognizance of vengeance."

"Bother the law!" exclaimed Dud, "*Man* takes notice of vengeance; man makes the law, therefore, man is superior to the law; and, besides, where do we get our notion of vengeance? From God himself."

"Yes, Dud; but 'vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,' and because man makes the law, that gives him no right to break it, either individually or collectively; but much less the latter. The forms of law are prescribed in part to prevent the very wantonness of lynching."

"Granted; but who says he's breaking it wantonly?"

The Deacon, who had been squirming like an eel to wriggle in the wrangle, asked sneeringly:

"Isn't killing negroes for pastime wanton, eh?"

"That's beside the question, *Deacon Hicks,*" emphasized Dud; "we are discussin' lynchin', not negroes."

"He! he!" tittered the Deacon, and then remarked, with fine sarcasm: "Oh!—course—lynching and negroes—oh, yes, I see—see; two en*tirely* different things—not to be thought of in connection—oh, dear no, he! he!"

Dud was nettled at this, but not deeming the good man a worthy foeman, he turned his back on him abruptly, and, facing Mat, said:

"I advocate lynchin' for one crime, regardless of color. Ain't that the discussion, Mat?"

"Well, no," answered Mat, cautiously; "you were upholdin' lynchin' as a concrete proposition."

"So,—so, and ain't lynchin' for one crime a concrete subject?"

"Abstract, Dud, perfectly abstract; and, like most abstract subjects, considerably changed in practice."

"No sophistry, Mat," objected Dud, "none of your lawyer's kink, now—broad, open question."

"I'm ready for it," caught up Mat, landing on his opponent again; "less have the 'broad, open question'—that's what we want. Lynchin'—that's the plain, simple, broad, open, single question. You're the fellow who's tryin' to hamper it with conditions. Why, shucks! if I advocated anything and wasn't able to uphold it, regardless of conditions, I'd quit."

The banter, sharp, though friendly, brought Dud right out on the firing line, and he waved his hand vigorously, taking in the entire crowd with the sweep, from Hicks to "Pedro," and declared:

"Very, well, I'll meet him on lynchin'—jes the one word. *I* don't have to fill on a pat hand—'specially 'ginst deuces and trays"; and then to Mat: "Take it, old lawyer, you called the trump; lynchin'—good! Now let's have it."

"Oh, no, Dud," laughed Mat, "you're the man who put the affirmative, so the burden's on you. You say it's right. Prove it. I don't have to prove it wrong, because your merely *sayin'* it's right ain't proved it at all."

The crowd, notwithstanding Dud was the popular one

(in the sense of chummyness), and had the popular end of the controversy, murmured assent at that plain rule of evidence, so there was nothing for it for Dud but to begin. He forthwith sighted his battery, determined to launch several radical shells, draw Mat on a shoal, and then wreck him with one bump. But a tug can't tow a steamer unless the steamer is willing, and even then the tug lets the whole river know she's at work. Dud was a natural hand and Mat's superior at stump repartee, but he had very little use for Plato, and those old codgers who were wont to build on the rockbed of logic.

"All right, gentlemen," he began, "I said lynchin' was right, I believe. Well, then, when a man——"

"Hold on, hold on," interrupted Mat; "let's start at the beginnin'. What's the definition of lynchin'?"

"Oh, the devil and Tom Walker!" jeered Dud, "everybody knows that."

"Well, what is it?" Mat persisted.

"Why—uh—why—uh," floundered his opponent, at sea, like a lot of us, who are always so powerfully certain; "why, I should say, lynchin' is a sort of an unconventional takin' off."

"That's wrong," put in the Deacon; "it's conventional in *this* section, as, as——"

"Riots up North," finished Dud, amid a general laugh of approval.

Mat, who saw the dangerous and irrelevant trend of the interruption, hurriedly called the question.

"Less have it, boys, who's got the best definition?"

Uncle Alec McNeil allowed that a spelling book might give it, or, very likely a geography (in the latter, probably under the head of *"Georgia"*); but Mat thought possibly Webster's was the safest resort. So Uncle Alec

McNeil shuffled up to the house, and returned after a long search (so he said) with a Webster. He also brought back a suspicious odor on his breath, but as that was neither here nor there, it may pass unnoticed, even though Bill Ott did imitate the gurgle, gurgle, gurgle of a bottle, at which Andy and the outfit guffawed very impolitely.

"Lynchin'," said Mat, turning the pages of the dictionary; "here it is: Lynch: To inflict pain, or punish without the forms of law, as by a mob or by unauthorized persons. Lynchin': Punishing or abusing without law. There you are, Dud." He laid the book down, vaulted on the counter, crossed his legs, stuck a pine splinter between his teeth, and drawled:

"Shoot, Luke—the rabbit's waitin'!"

CHAPTER XI.

"MORE THEORIES."

Dud was about to obey Mat's direction when the rear door was pushed slightly open and "Dear's" classic head obtruded itself through the aperture.

"McNeil," she commanded, in a low voice, but none the less guttural, "I want to see you."

As she already saw him to the extent of a most menacing, not to say ferocious, glare, the verbally expressed desire was in the nature of a redundant superfluity, to say nothing of its being an unpardonable interruption.

Nevertheless, though the above were Dud's thoughts, his hand ceased its pending flourish, and his ahem-preceded "Gentleman" died a weak death as Uncle Alec McNeil wended his way through the Ott end of the audience and hove to within breath-smelling distance of his spouse.

From disjointed expression of "goin' in that jug agin," "know what you was after," "can't lie out of it," and "be too drunk to open up to-morrow" on "Dear's" part, and equally disjointed and far more earnest (but unavailing) avowals and denials of "huntin' for the dictionary," "just a bare sip," "cold air," "felt shakerish-like," "no, no; 'pon my word," on Uncle Alec McNeil's part, the said audience, especially the Ott end, divined that "Dear" and Uncle Alec McNeil were engaged in Kilkenny love passages, superinduced and brought about by Uncle Alec McNeil's

recent long search for Webster's. And as the said audience, and very especially the Ott end of it, never at any time exceeded, personally, the low temperature, financially, of their pockets in "Dear's" disinterested estimation; and, whereas, "Dear" rioted in the hallucination that said audience, most especially the Ott end of it, was generally the propelling cause of Uncle Alec McNeil's locomotion jugwards; and, whereas, she reveled in the insane alarm that, being a drink or two to *star*board, he might unwittingly fail to note a stray filch, or treat to cheroots without charging same to somebody; and, whereas, she, herself, was too far *star*board on drinks this particular night to attend shop; now, therefore, she willed it *Resolved,* That Uncle Alec McNeil lay the meeting on the table before he, or she, or both of them, required laying *under* the table.

So there was nothing for it but to leave Judge Lynch as suddenly suspended as that meritorious magistrate has in his day left many another subject—though in all candor, while he leaves his subjects suspended, it can never be said that they are not finished.

On emerging into the roadway the audience perceived it was raining, and the Ott end being—*a la* a tadpole—the large end of the crowd (if we except Deacon Hicks' feet), and being—not *a la* a tadpole—opposed to water under other than the most stringent provisions, the proportions of the assembly, by unanimous consent, dissolved. The Deacon, smarting from his summary snubbing at Dud's hands, bade Mat good-night, jerkedly, and betook himself to his sanctuary. Wicked Bill, Constable Tobe Ott, nephew of the former, and son of old Mr. and Mrs. Tobe Ott, Andy Dodd, "Pedro" and several more choice and other grades of spirits, relatively speaking, reopened the session under Hicks' lumber shed, where it might literally

be said that High and Low stood on an equal footing—likewise Jack and Game. Mat and Dud struck out west towards the Doyleses.

"The old lady's wrathy to-night," Dud remarked; "but she saved your hide for you, Mat."

"Huh!" grunted that gentleman, in an exclamation of incredulous disgust at the idea of his hide requiring saving.

"Huh! *my* hide!"

"Yes, *your* hide! Why, the crowd was all on my end of it; you'd 'a only had the Deacon."

"The Deacon and right," sententiously observed Doyle.

"Ha, ha! That's good: the Deacon and right—what a pair to fill on. Lord a-mercy, Mat, do you suppose right would perch on the same limb with the De——"

"Now stop, Dud; you and I don't agree on Brother Hicks now—though I know you're too just to hold out aginst him forever."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Dud aside, as though forever was a mere second compared to the time he could hold out against that lowly man of God; but he discarded the "pshaw" and its correlative reflections, and said, soothingly and good-naturedly:

"Well, well; never mind, old grubber, we won't settle the Deacon yet, and when I'm ready to change my views on *him* I'll give you credit for it just the same as I'll chalk it down, too, if you convert me on lynchin'—*if* you do."

"There you go agin, Dud; you're a slick one—a reg'lar eel. It ain't my business to convert you, *you've* got the burden of——"

"Oh, hang the burden! I know what you're after: you're tryin' to get me to tell all I know and then twist it

aroun' my neck till I'm done for and choked on my own hamestring."

"Not at all; not a bit of it; you took the affirmative, and you know very well that you'll get the rejoinder—the last word; if lynchin's right you surely oughtn't to be afraid to say *why* it's right."

"What's the use?" queried Dud, who, now that the crowd was gone, and no one but Mat to see his choice gestures, wasn't over eager to prolong the discussion. "What if I do give my reasons, it'd be just like you givin' me your reasons for Hicks bein' an animated Bible—you wouldn't convince me, nor I you."

"Oh, yes you would!" Mat asserted, vehemently, for wordy war was his delight and element; crowd or no crowd he was an argumentative war horse who scented scuffles afar off and cried, *"Huh! Huh!"*

"You ought to know me well enough, Dud, to know that if you convince me I'll acknowledge it, something some other folks ought to do who've had enough said to them about the De—about other things——"

"Oh, stop! stop!" broke in his friend, shoving him dangerously near the road ditch; "let up and go on with your rat killin', or your nigger savin' as you call it, I reckon."

"*You* go on, then," demanded Mat, determined that Dud should "lead off"; "you go ahead without your nigger *killin'*, as *you* call it, I reckon; you've been dodging aroun' the bush ever since the question commenced. I don't believe you've got a single point in that old head of yours."

Mat said this seriously, and might have meant it for aught you, or Dud, or I know. At any rate, Dud ceased his jocular air and said quickly:

"All right! Here goes point one, and *mind,* you are

to hold that bell-clapper tongue of yours until I dance this figure out."

"Shoot, Luke," murmured Mat, bringing up at his front gate and holding it open for Dud to pass in. But Dud didn't "Shoot, Luke," nor did he pass in. He halted and glanced toward the house. There was a firelight flickering and dancing and gleaming from the windows, and female forms could be seen inside—three female forms, to be precise—all of them known to us, but one (the smallest one and the one that was rocking most vigorously and seemed to be engaged in a calisthenic discourse), unknown to Dud. Mat followed his chum's look with a passing keen perception, for he picked out the object on which Dud's eyes—I won't say rested, but wavered—which was no larger nor no smaller a person than Miss Hennon.

When we left Mat and Miss Hennon filing up the Doyle walk early in September—or late in August, I believe it was—anyhow, I remember we left them advancing on the Doyle residence, and advanced ourselves on Deacon Hicks, and while we were contemplating the ecstatic reverie of Brother Setton, Miss Hennon and Mother Doyle were deciding that each appeared likable, and upon Betty's declaration in the kitchen, while Miss Hennon was awaiting dinner, that she believed Mat was as strongly in favor of taking the schoolmarm as she was about saving "them butter balls" (and, gracious knows, that's powerful strong). Mother Doyle hastened back to the sitting-room to make herself perfectly lovable to the probationer—to do which, bless her heart, she didn't need much exertion. But she found the sitting-room empty, and being a bit wrought up, thought that Miss Hennon had taken umbrage at their leaving her alone, and left. She knew city folks were terrible sticklers about such things. She was on the point

of returning to the kitchen in despair when, glancing out of the window, she saw Mat and Miss Hennon at the fence, and on looking closely, which she could scarce do for amazement, she saw the black sides and white briskets of "them identical butter balls"—*and not one of 'em squealing.*

"Betty," she called; "come here."

"Comin', mother."

"Look."

"Sakes alive!"

"And the pigs."

"The pigs?"

"Yes—they ain't makin' a bit o' fuss."

"I reckon they never saw Mat with a lady before and don't know it's him."

When Mat and Miss Hennon came to the house it developed that Mat had fetched the squealers an armful of nubbins from the barn to occupy their attention and enable Miss Hennon to get a good look at them. And Miss Hennon said, enthusiastically:

"Those pigs are a splendid advertisement, Mrs. Doyle; I'd board anywhere to get a good *bait* of them" (again that cute adoption of our idiom). When she said that, Mother Doyle and Betty looked for Mat to retire permanently and hermetically in his shell and take his pigs in with him. Here was this schoolmarm, whom Mother Doyle was wanting solely in order to save those porkers—here, I say, was this schoolmarm, anticipating with voracious glee a meal's victuals—maybe several of them—on Mat's favorites. It just completely bumfuzzled Mother Doyle, and that's the only outlandish word I know which will anyways fit. As for Betty, she actually dropped an egg on the floor; and old Ball, who was a privileged char-

acter in the kitchen, nonchalantly lapped it up and looked a vote of thanks at Miss Hennon for being the cause of it.

But alarm quickly made way for wonderment. "Are you going to board with us, then?" asked Mat, in what Mother Doyle and Betty mistook for a fit of undiplomatic desperation.

"After seeing those pigs!" was the answering exclamation. "Why, Mr. Doyle, you all can't *put* me out now! *Ain't* you sorry?" and she said that "ain't" with her little mouth spread and her teeth showing for all the world like a regular hoe-down Dixie girl. At that moment Mat couldn't think of any Dixie girl who could say "ain't" near as well.

"Huh!" he laughed (as Mother Doyle repeated some hundreds of times on the quiet to Betty). "Huh! Well, the directors 'd better furnish you with a rig this winter, for when you get *one* mess of the sausage mother'll make out o' them Poland Chinas walkin' 'll be out o' the question—you'll jes stay too full o' sausage to even waddle! Huh, huh!"

That settled it for good and for all.

Betty wasn't quite sure whether Mat's reason hadn't become deranged on account of the double catastrophe of a female boarder and the impending fate of his favorites—and, indeed, she and Mother Doyle theorized not a little over the miracle, for it was nothing short of one. Mat, however, didn't theorize. He kicked theories sky, west and crooked—flung his terrapin shell clean over into the next county, and banished Dud's hatchet-faced, rasping-voiced Miss Hennon into ignominious oblivion.

"What's the matter, Dud?" he inquired, still holding the gate ajar; "you needn't try to go home; it's goin' to rain all night."

'Oh, Mat, I'm much obliged, but feedin'——"

"Now, don't go to rakin' up any 'buts'—ain't nobody goin' to run off with your shack 'fore mornin', and you wet through and through right now," he added, feeling Dud's coat.

"Like to stay best kind, Mat, but the hands——"

"The hands'll feed everything—they got nothin' else to do, anyhow, now—why, come along—*she* ain't a-goin' to hurt you."

"She? Who?" (Innocence personified!)

"Miss Hennon."

"Oh, stuff!—wasn't studyin' 'bout Miss What-you-call-her." (Done forgot her name already!)

"Don't tell me any such yarn, Dudley Trenome! You been lookin' right through the window at her like she was a varmint."

"Well—I couldn't look through the planks or the chimney at her, could I?" and Dud essayed a laugh, which Mat ignored.

"You needn't be skeered up 'bout your wantin' a Pike girl to teach, she don't even know about it; you think we'd talk about you——"

"That ain't what's botherin me, Mat; I don't give a continental about Miss—Miss——"

"Hennon."

"Miss Hennon teachin', I'm thinkin' about feedin' the stock an' things in the mornin'."

"Get out, you old scamp, you! You've stayed all night here a thousand times, and when did you ever get so pestered 'bout feedin' before? You jes ain't got over the new teacher, an' you know it—here, go in—if you don't want to bother around Miss Hennon we can go on up to my room.

Pshaw, boy, I didn't know you was afraid of a petticoat—thought *I* was usually the one, accordin' to you."

While saying this, Mat had been leading the not very unwilling young man along the walk, and presently they began to ascend the porch steps.

"There comes Mat," said Betty in the sitting-room.

"And somebody with him," remarked Miss Hennon.

"Sounds like Dudley's step," observed Mother Doyle.

Miss Hennon knew who Dudley was, "by reputation," as the phrase goes. Mother Doyle and Betty had recounted the entire list of Dud's virtues intermittently, from almost the first day she came (but they, nor Mat—none of the Doyleses, not even old Ball—had ever said boo about Dud's opposition to her before the Board). She had also heard of Dud from another source. Deacon Hicks had informed her of his presence on earth, and left her to infer that his eventual change of residence would necessarily be to a climate where certain countless numbers of souls are in a state of constant ignition. The good Deacon also told her that had there been two like Dud on the Board, she would never have enjoyed the extraordinary, providential-like fortune of teaching Pike tots in that year of grace. (This information, by the bye, Miss Hennon withheld from the Doyleses, and from the same spirit that prompted them to withhold their's from her.)

So we may say that the little teacher was in a most undecided frame of mind regarding Mr. Trenome—sort of between the devil and the deep blue sea—not that I wish to apostrophize the Doyleses as old Neptune. According to Mat—and Mat had dwelt at great length on Dud—Dud was without a superior in morals, moods and manners. On the other hand, Brother Hicks summarily listed him in the hemp candidate class. Then, when Mat touched

on Setton and ascribed all the apostolic virtues to *him,* including, of course, the Washingtonian incapacity to prevaricate, Laura was truly bewildered. The only conclusion she could arrive at was one at which, if you knew her good sense better, you would evince no surprise, *i. e.,* she reserved placing Mr. Trenome on any standard until she met him.

Consequently, when Mother Doyle made the above observation, and Betty threw open the sitting-room door to give the boys light, Miss Hennon turned in her chair, preparatory to rising, and peered into the hall with as great degree of anxiety as Dud, who had been peering in the window all the way up the walk, was simultaneously experiencing. And if the truth must be told, the schoolmarm and the school director wouldn't have been at all unprepared on the one side for a second edition of Mr. Squeers, and, on the other, for an excellent portrait of Charity Pecksniff.

CHAPTER XII.

HER?

MAT and Dud didn't sit on Judge Lynch that night: they sat in the sitting room with the women folks until it was too late to sit on anything—even a chair. After they had exhausted every other subject, except hanging without due process of law, Dud observed, jokingly:

"See here: eleven o'clock may do well enough for you town folks, but us country people can't stand it."

"Listen to him," echoed Betty, "jes listen to him; when he's up at all hours sparkin' those girls back of his place!"

Dud didn't take the remark in as near a careless, half-vain fashion as usual, and when Mat put in:

"I say *all* hours! Why, every owl up in those woods knows him," Dud said to the schoolmarm (as if it mattered twopence to her):

"Mat's a confirmed woman-hater, Miss Hennon, and thinks because we're such old friends that I ought to be one, too."

"Huh!" retorted Mat, and as such a "huh" as Mat usually emitted, may be, like our astounding (patent) medical discoveries, turned to any desirable account, Mother Doyle remarked that, "Yes, she thought it was bed-time also," and so to bed they all went—the little teacher convinced that the oft-mentioned Mr. Trenome was a more likable personage than friend Dickens' worthy schoolmaster, and Dud firm in the conviction that the

erstwhile unwelcome Miss Hennon was Charity Pecksniff's antipodes. After the boys were in bed, and when Mat had just about got his snoring apparatus in shape, Dud raised his head up in the dark and half-whispered:

"Mat, I take all that Yankee-old-maid-business back; she's an exception," and his friend snored back: "Huh, umph, huh—uh—a—uh—haw-w-w."

"Dad blame his time!" Dud softly exclaimed, "he's gone to sleep. Well, if *she* can't keep him awake he'll never lose sleep over women."

Trenome was up a close second to the chickens next morning, and scarcely waited on breakfast. In fact, he was on his way to the stable, intending to start before eating, but, happening to run across the little teacher, and asking her what in the world brought *her* out so early, she, of course, asserted her Yankee by answering him with a like query.

"Why," he replied, "*I'm* anxious to get home and feed —I'm afraid my negroes won't 'tend to it properly."

"*Your* negroes?" she queried, mock-inocently, and then added, "I thought slavery was abolished down here?"

"Oh, did you? That's more than most of you people think."

Laura saw that he was nettled and a bit too fiery to conceal it, and she rather liked him for it. She said, quickly:

"Forgive me—I was only joking; I've seen worse slaves from where I came than ever were here—and I've been one, too—but don't you think it's unhealthy to ride so far on an empty stomach?" she asked, changing the subject and dismissing a bitter expression from her face.

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Dud, and he threw out his chest

with that pride which prevents youth from ever taking stock in the bogie man disease.

"Well, it *is* unhealthy; you wouldn't make your horse do it, and you can't stand near as much physical strain as your horse."

"Pshaw!" again Dud exclaimed, but he stayed to breakfast, "for," said he at the table, just as though he had attended school in the forties, "these modern teachers are powerful up on hygiene, and diet, and all those newfangled ideas, and, of course, a school director had to sort o' keep on the band wagon."

He was off, though, quick enough after breakfast, and put his pony (or Betty's pony, as he now called her, she being the one he promised her for a wedding present), over the road in a smart gallop. By the time he pulled up at his lot gate the pony was well blown and inclined to be somewhat sulky over it, too.

"Never mind, young un," he said, patting her shoulder, "this is your last run for a while now, your ole man's got to get down to punkins, hear?" and the pony looked as if she hoped he'd get his fill of "punkins" and not hurry, if getting down to 'em meant a lay off for her.

Dud did get down to punkins with an italicized *P;* not that he had ever been any stranger to work, but then he had never *had* to work extra hard, and most of us Southern lads are not fiends after it when rest will do even half as well. Dud had been an orphan ever since he reached maturity, his mother having died several years previously after surviving her husband a short time. Since her death Dud had kept the farm up to its high standard; that is, had come out even every year and sufficient over to avoid mortgaging against another season. There was no particular credit coming to him on that showing, as the

farm averaged from three-fourths to a bale of cotton and twenty-five bushels of corn to the acre even in dry spells.

He very seldom touched a plow, except when wet weather rushed the hands; he had nobody to look after but himself; and, take his position all in all, he had no great amount of applause due him for even letting well-enough alone; and the fact of the matter is, those folks who are content to let well-enough alone are generally the kind who get all the praise they deserve—which is none. If Mat Doyle had had the Trenome place and enjoyed the same "lay" as Dud had enjoyed since becoming sole owner, it is entirely reasonable to presume that the place would have increased in value something like half; but then Mat came of no ordinary stock on his mother's side, and the comparison is scarcely fair. What Mat was, heredity had put in him; Dud's worth, if not as great, was all his own, or, at any rate, filtered down from some fore-parent of whom he had no knowledge, for Dud's father and mother had both been absolute minus signs, as far as vim, perseverance, never-say-stop qualities went. Dud inherited as good a farm as Pike boasted, but he fell heir to no thrifty examples, whereas Mat had received untold advances on a maternal legacy of "don't wait for the sun to shine—*make hay anyhow.*"

Dud thought of all these things the morning he returned from the Doyleses, and his reflections led him to wonder why he hadn't sooner noticed the slipshod state of affairs on the farm before. The barn roof was in a dickens of a fix; the smoke-house (full of prime meat) was as ramshackly as old man Honeyburr's gin over the creek, and *it* had been scheduled to tumble down ever since the Brooks-Baxter war; every other fence panel was more patched and worse patched than Deacon Hicks' sawmill belt; in short,

so many erstwhile scarce-heeded needs and wants were glaringly apparent that our friend declared:

"Why, the place is goin' to the devil!"

Just why he arrived at that conclusion on the morning in question rather than any other morning, he couldn't have explained, and as I am merely a narrator, I can't explain. But arrive at it he did; and the frosts having killed out the miasma and all the rest of that tired feeling, and toned up the ozone, he was in trim to be emphatic regarding the satanic drift of his farm.

"Yes, goin' right to the devil," he repeated, "and the brakes are goin' to be put on, I'm here to tell you. I'm dad blamed if the crows won't be buildin' nests in the house if I don't get down to punkins."

At it he went, not hammer and tongs, but hammer and nails. November gave way to December; the old year limped out and the new one skipped in; hotbeds came in season; ground began to be turned over and harrowed, and Dud had only been into Pike two or three times: once to help Mat butcher the Poland Chinas, once to attend the Sunday-school Christmas tree (at which Miss Hennon's pupils held forth), and once to visit the school, that being a duty of each director, the failure to perform which at least once a term meant a penalty of ten dollars. Over and above those three times Dud stayed at home, sending one of the negro boys in when occasion demanded.

When Petticoated and Pantalooned Pike, or more concisely, Consolidated Pike, learned that repairing and patching was the cause of his absence from the busy mart of whittledom, it (C. P.) at once began speculation as to who was the woman in the case; and that was a matter of some latitude, as Dud had "gone with" every available unmarried and widowed petticoat in Pike and all its adja-

cent counties. Mother Doyle gave as strong currency to the notion as anybody, and she would generally wind up her guesses as to Dud's future "woman" with a "go-and-do-likewise" look at Mat and the little teacher, and some such philosophic remark as, "Well, that's what all young folks ought to do," and "She was sure whoever got Dudley got nigh as good a boy as Matthew," whereat Matthew would say, "Huh, lots better, mother, *lots* better."

Meanwhile Dud hammered and sawed away, totally oblivious to the excitement he was producing—and any one at all acquainted with Pike, knows that a man hard at work is a terribly exciting spectacle—to say nothing of marrying being the reputed cause of the phenomenon. As I said, winter snowed and froze itself out and early spring came edging her shy way in, and as Consolidated Pike had worried itself into a state of energetic lassitude over Dud and his future "woman" with no tangible results, whittledom was forced in self-defense to take up a change or undergo brain paralysis.

Those of us who know anything about politics in the jurisdiction of Judge Lynch of which I write, are aware that State and County elections are held every two years, and that the Democratic party several months prior to the election holds a sort of State and County caucus in which the aspirants for the various offices are presented to the party and from which number the regular party ticket is chosen. These caucuses are called primaries, though Old Man Dodd always insisted on pronouncing them pri-*marys,* emphasizing and accenting the "marys." Each county has its own time for holding these primaries, the earliest beginning about April and running from that on up to late in June, or, say, ten weeks before election. This year of which I write, to wit, the year in which Dud

consummated his unheard-of notion of not letting well enough alone, opened up the regular biennial campaign. Dud had worked hard and faithfully on his repairs, but winter faded away and found some several hundred dollars more outlay needed, and our friend Trenome's purse in a drawn-up condition as though one of Uncle Alec McNeil's shakers had struck it. Dud took an evening off to cogitate over the situation, and summed it up confidentially to a pile of blazing logs in his fireplace, thus:

"I've done fairly well considerin' I'd all but let the old place rot—but not nigh as well as I ought to and mean to do. There ain't no use talkin', this farm's got to be kep' up, and if I don't switch it back onto the main line durin' this spurt, Lord knows when I'll feel in the mood agin; but my money's runnin' low an' I'll be hanged if I buy lumber on credit from Hicks. It's tough enough to have to buy from him anyhow, an' if there was another mill nearer 'n a day's haulin', blamed if I'd fool with him; but so long as I'm payin' cash, all the Hickses on earth can't beat me. I *could* mortgage, but that's h——l agin! and if the old place goes under a mortgage *once,* it's good-bye Bill, don't stay long. It took Mother Doyle fourteen years 'n more to get over old man Doyle's debts, and I never saw the day *I* had her stayin' qualities. No, by ganny, I won't mortgage, 'n I won't buy lumber on time, 'n I *won't* stop on these repairs an' new fences 'n things. I *could* let out a couple o' hands an' go back behind old Beck myself, but, pshaw! that 'd throw these jobs 'way behind, an' besides, those niggers have been here time out o' mind 'n it 'd be a shame to let 'em go. No! by ganny, I'm here to tell you, I'll not have any o' the Trenome hands lose what's as much a home to them as me; an' yet I'm goin' to finish this work 'ginst plantin'

time if I have to sop sorgum the rest o' the year. Pshaw! Here I am nigh thirty an' lettin' the best improved farm in Pike rot away, jes' doin' nothin' but talkin' politics up at town 'n swingin' corners o' nights with a passel o' gals who ain't deuce high to me, nor never will be."

It was pretty plain from that last remark that Consolidated Pike had been eminently incorrect on the petticoat question, or, at least, in so far as their matrimonial probabilities went.

"I have it!" exclaimed Dud, resuming his soliloquy after a long silence. "Speakin' o' politics, by ganny, the race for Sheriff's open this year, and I've got the thing for the askin'. Lessee—I can clear twelve hundred a year anyhow out of it, 'n that's way yonder more 'n I'll need to finish up on; pshaw! I can borrow easily up to the City on the strength o' the race 'n keep right ahead. I've sorter had a notion o' runnin' for that or somethin', anyhow. The canvass won't cost me anything worth speakin' of, an' what with Mat's friends an' my friends, why, even if I have an opponent, or a couple of 'em, I'm safe. I'll promise Tobe Ott the deputyship, 'n that 'll land the Ott gang, an', by ganny, those scoundrels come mighty nigh bein' the balance o' power. Yes, sir, I'll try it a crack; I'll jes' write up a little talk to-night an' put her in next Saturday's paper. Why, pshaw!—wonder I hadn't thought of that sooner—I always hankered after something public-like, anyhow, and then, I'll go at readin' law right away, an' by the end of my first term I can be admitted, 'n then another two years 'n I'll give 'em a run for prosecutin' attorney—I can do it, why not? Mat always said I was a natural born lawyer, 'n time I'm prosecutin' attorney, why, I can feel justified in askin' her."

Her! So it was a *her,* after all, who had caused all that hammering and slashing, and sawing. But what *her?* By ganny! as Dud would say, I don't know. He hinted plainly enough that he had no connubial designs on those countless Pike girls with whom he had swung divers corners; so I can't imagine who he was driving at. It may have been some Illinois her—Dud was up at Cairo once; it may have been some her up at the City—Dud took his cotton up himself every fall; it may have been—no telling who.

One thing I do know—he swung no more corners—"quit 'em cold," as the boys say, and all the many hers who he had danced and flirted with for miles around, allowed that "Dud Trenome's done went with that poky old Mat Doyle till he jes' ain't fit for nothin'!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DEACON—DOYLE—DUTY.

THE following Saturday Pike received Dud's "talk," and that sanctified portion of the community, represented and condensed in the person of Deacon Setton Hicks, took his paper over to the office and gave the "talk" the sort of perusal Napoleon would have probably bestowed on Wellington's plan of Waterloo. Though the Deacon was distinctively a consistent member of the Commercial Hickses, yet he could, when occasion demanded, apply his "deadfall" principles to politics with full as much ability as to sawmilling, provided, of course, that politics were in anywise connected with his profit and loss account; and so long as we are on politics, I think right here and now a simple statement of facts regarding the Deacon's affairs will assist you in determining that meek man's precise status relative to Dud's candidacy. The Deacon, as was remarked some chapters back, had been up to date prevented, by a combination of untoward circumstances, from clipping his quota of Pike wool, and he had for a long while been cudgeling the very sanctimoniousness out of his wits to arrive at the goal of all the Hickses by a short cut. He was, as we know, in arrears on his machinery, and his account with the jobbers up at the City had been, like Uncle Sam, steadily expanding along lines alarmingly inconsistent with mutual good will between expandor and expandee. In fact, the jobbers

had begun to insinuate that attachments would shortly issue unless something substantial was forthcoming, and, to sum up, in short, our good brother had arrived at that interesting juncture where he must *do* or be *done*.

Mat Doyle had been of age some years, and Mother Doyle had long since turned over the entire business management of the farm to her son. Deacon Hicks knew, as who did not? that the Doyle place could readily find an advancement up at the City. Aside from its being extra quality soil and free of any encumbrance, it always presented a spick and span appearance—solid fences, neatly whitewashed outhouses, and the dwelling ever seemingly fresh painted.

Now, the Deacon's desire had been, and still was, to induce Mat to raise a loan on the farm, said loan, of course, to find its immediate way into the Hicks till. The reader will doubtless ask himself what the Deacon was to give as an equivalent; that is, the reader who has never run afoul of Hicksism will ask himself that absurd question. As a matter of cold, stubborn fact, the Deacon was to give no equivalent; apparently, though, he was to be conferring upon Mat and the Doyleses a truly Christian favor without hope of earthly reward. Mat placed implicit reliance on Hicks, as did Mother Doyle, and even Betty. Betty's intuition usually landed her on the correct side of people's characters, but she exercised her intuitive powers only "by and with the advice and consent" of Mat. Her confidence in Mat's infallibility of judgment was equal to Lem Jucklin's "kiver to kiver" faith in the Book, and unless Mat was silent concerning such and such a person's comings and shortcomings, or, which was rarely the case, was outspoken concerning the *short*-comings of the party in question, why, his confiding sis-

ter took it for granted that there were no flaws to be found. In the Deacon's case, Mat was ready to sound his praises to the echo on the briefest kind of notice, and hence, I repeat, even Betty accepted him—sore eyes, number nines, double Ee's and all. The Deacon would have belied the most unimpeachable traditions of his ilk had he, being aware of the esteem in which the Doyleses held him, been content to take passive cognizance of it and not coin his knowledge into tangible benefits. Even had he wanted his present inducement—I may say *necessity*—to realize a bonus (or malus) from some source other than two b'heavies and one b'tens, his very nature would have prompted him to turn the Doyle friendship to good account. How much more, then, was the incentive when he cast up results and found himself, after nearly a score of years in Pike, but a scant fathom further financially than the carpet-bag condition in which he had first set sail for that ill-fated burg.

The holy man's plan for realizing the desired testimonial out of the Doyleses was a simple one, being nothing more nor less than an offer to Mat of an undivided one-half interest in the Setton Hicks Lumber Co., with all profits and proceeds thereunto accruing in the regular line of two b'beavies and so on .

But—drat these *buts,* thought Setton—but simple, and "child-like and bland" though this appeared, a proper lever had long been wanting to bring about its consummation.

Mat was conservative concerning his own affairs, and far more so when the issues affected his mother's property, and while not of that nice, calm "let-well-enough-alone" class, still he believed in having a non-slipable grip on *better* before letting well enough go. He was

at present making a comfortable living on the farm for all hands, from old Ball up; he had never dabbled in what your city man is pleased to call money making schemes; he was single, with no prospect of any Pike girl ever engaging his affections, and not the remotest likelihood of his ever going out of Pike wife-hunting; and, above all, it was dollars to doughnuts (or goobers, if those odds don't suit you) that if any venture, however promising, required the borrowing of money, he would drop it forthwith. All these obstacles showed our Brother Setton, that while it was the simplest thing imaginable to *offer* Mat a partnership, getting him to buy it was the epidermus removing rub.

It would never do for him to let the Doyleses, or any one else, know that he was anxious to sell a share of the business—Mat might be fooled as to the Deacon, because he had a limited knowledge of men; but he'd go slow on any business proposition, because Mother Doyle had long since taught him that money affairs required more watching than even Uncle Alec McNeil—which was climaxing comparisons.

At seasonable opportunities Hicks had hinted enough to the Doyleses, and especially Mat, to let them know that his mill was a paying industry, equal, if not superior, to the Hottentot Pie and Bible Fund, of which he was the local custodian; now and then when Mat came over for a small bill of dimension stuff or weather-boarding, he would find the Deacon perusing an eloquent supplication from some moneyed would-be investor to be taken in business, and at such times the good man would say:

"Matthew—believe in charity—all that sort—thing, but gracious! if—was to sell shares—this mill to every-

body—wants—buy 'd soon have none at all—none at all —my son."

Thus had matters jogged at a most discouraging jog for Setton, until, as we have seen, he overrode Dud's opposition and selected a new teacher for the school. He had no particular object in the selection other than a future small saving to himself, but after he had seen Miss Hennon, and when Mother Doyle in getting her address from him, had stated for what purpose she wished it, a train of thought freighted with the most sugared speculations whizzed through the Hicksonian cranium. Small wonder that he smiled, laughed and roared when Pike's "cutter" joke at Mat's expense reached his capacious ears. He rightly (and righteously, no doubt) felt a proprietary interest in that joke, and after his glee had to some extent subsided, he set about turning it to advantage on his main plan, or, in other words, making a practical joke out of it.

Mat taught a class in the Sunday-school of which Hicks was superintendent, and it wasn't long before the zealous Deacon had Miss Hennon teaching a class also. He cultivated the little teacher with a most exemplary vim, and while pointing out to her the unworthiness and wickedness of Beardless Pike and the machiavellian propensities of our good friend Dud, did not neglect to expatiate on the virtues of our other good friend Mat—doing it all with a master hand, with no trace of match-making apparent, and, in fact, glorying in Mat's confirmed bachelorhood. In that connection he frequently told Miss Hennon, in strictest confidence, that he only feared one thing, viz., Mat's friendship for "that dangerous Trenome," and the corresponding evil influence "that dangerous Trenome" was liable to exert. If he could bring

himself to hope that *Mat's* influence would outweigh it and in the fullness of time recall "that dangerous Trenome" from the path of perverseness, it would be different; but how could he, when "that dangerous Trenome" had served on the School Board with him, the Deacon, two terms straight hand running, and was now as much a follower of Satan as ever? How could Mat succeed where Hicks failed? Yea, verily, how! So, said the trusting man, there was naught for it but to hope that the intervening hand of a kind Providence would 'ere long separate the wheat from the tares—put "that dangerous Trenome" on the Belzeebub Through Line and Matthew on the New Jerusalem Limited. He never hinted this hope to Mat, and as winter passed away and Dud's visits to Pike grew fewer and further between, the Deacon supposed that the schoolmarm was as apt a pupil as a teacher, and rejoiced accordingly; he had never had a friend himself and had never been one (which was the reason he never had one), and hence he couldn't be expected to know that friendship, like the Century plant, lives and flourishes though it may bloom at ever so rare intervals—it flashes out when needed, and that's all true friends want —the knowledge that the flame is there and will burst forth in all its pristine brightness at the touch of a kindred spark.

So it was with feelings of pious exultation that the lowly brother read Dud's "talk" and saw in it every sign of fair sailing for the Hicksonian bark. He took the paper over to the Doyleses, and, seeing Mat in the barnyard, bustled up the lane, agitation portrayed in every motion of his Adonis-like figure; for he determined to prosecute the campaign now with undisguised aggressiveness.

"Morning, Matthew—all well—Good! Seen—paper? No? Never—more surprised in—life; picked—paper up just now—saw this—here—read it—guess, though, you knew—it."

Mat's eye settled where the Deacon's finger indicated and he said slowly:

"No, sir; what is it? 'To the voters of Pike County: Recognizing your right to know the principles of those who desire to serve you, I shall, in making this formal announcement of my candidacy for Sheriff, acquaint you with my views on questions concerning our common interest,'—no, Deacon, I hadn't heard of it before—who is it?"

"See—see," said Hicks, pointing to the signature.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mat, "it's Dud. Huh! That *is* a sort of a surprise."

"Surprise! Should say *so!* With his views, too."

"Well, I hope he'll get it."

"Matthew, you—you can't be serious?"

"I most certainly am; why not?"

"Knowing his views like you do?"

"Why, I never knowed nothin' wrong with his views on politics; 'course, I ain't no politician, but they always struck me as correct. True, Dud's a *leetle*—uh—as you might say, liberal 'bout religion, but he'd make a whoppin' fine Sheriff; he'd arrest the—old Scratch if necessary."

"Yes—and lynch—negro, too!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mat, smiling, "*that's* what you mean, is it, Deacon? Well, huh! you know Dud's bark's worse 'n his bite."

"Tut, tut, Matthew—he's rabid on lynching—rabid—perfectly rabid—yes, sir!"

"He'd do his duty as Sheriff."

"Mean to say he'd protect—negro from—mob?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh—be sure—to be sure—guess he'd *say* he would now—since—running for office."

"Deacon Hicks," remarked Mat, respectfully, but none the less firmly, "if you mean by that that he'd lie to gain office, you don't know him. When Dud Trenome lies I'll be ready to join the P. P.'s!"

"Very good, Matthew—very good; never said he'd lie—not at all—not at all—Matthew; believe he'll stick to principles—"

"Well, has he put any wrong principles in his 'nounce-*ment?*" (Mat always used a broad ending.)

"No—no—good—far as they go—but aren't all there—left out the most important—never mentioned lynching."

"Lynchin's not of so much account here; Pike ain't had one in nigh ten years."

"Don't alter—principle, Matthew—not—particle—not—*particle.* Trenome is out and out—favor of it."

"Oh, huh! Deacon Hicks, 'z I said, Dud's powerful keen on the bark."

"Very well—very well. I'll put—question squarely to him; you abide by—answer?"

"Me? Of course."

That was enough for Hicks. The next week's paper contained a request for information as to Dud's precise position with reference to mob law. The question was put unequivocally, thus:

"Mr. Trenome: If elected Sheriff, and at any time a negro accused of rape should be in your charge, would you protect him from violence?

"Signed—A VOTER."

Dud's answer was even more to the point. After remarking that he felt commiseration for a voter who was ashamed to sign his name, he declared as follows:

"If I am elected Sheriff, and a man (*black* or *white*) against whom there is the charge of rape, is placed in my keeping, and that man has been apprehended in open flight, I shall not withhold him from any vengeance the outraged citizens of this county see fit to visit upon him. In the presence of such a fiend and such a crime, law can know, nor ought to know, no moderation. All the statutes to the contrary notwithstanding, this crime outlaws its perpetrator, and a trial would but mock Justice, Mercy and God Himself."

Hicks hugged Dud's answer to his bosom and hied him jubilantly to Mat. When Mat had finished reading his old friend's reply, he murmured simply:

"Dud's wrong." Then he stooped down, picked up a twig and commenced chewing on it, and Hicks, not deeming it wise to push matters just then, clapped him as high up on the shoulders as he could reach, and said:

"Keep—paper and think it over; see him—maybe you can change him—see him to-morrow—holy Sabbath may have—softening effect on him—and come over to—office next Monday. Must hurry back—several cars lumber—shipped this evening; business keeps me tied down—tied down—more orders than—fill for—month. Good day; good day, Matthew—come Monday—we'll talk—over; no matter how busy I am—matter—this sort is one—duty—duty, my son—duty for you—me—all of us, and Matthew, when duty—involved, you stop—plows, I stop—saws, and—do—your—duty—eh?"

"I've always tried to see it that way, Deacon."

"That you have, Matthew—that you have; ever was—man of duty, you are him."

"Every one ought to be, Deacon Hicks, an' no cause to brag for bein' one. When duty's done, we've only done our duty."

"Yes—and when duty's done, all's done, my son."

And Deacon Setton Hicks left Mat, firm in the resolve that if he didn't make young Doyle see his duty in the issue at stake through Hicksonian spectacles, he'd kick himself ignominiously out of the ranks of Hickses.

CHAPTER XIV.

DUTY.

A FAMOUS old sea dog said on a memorable occasion, "England expects every man to do his duty,"—a reasonable enough expectation, when every man's duty was merely to chop away until he was in turn chopped away.

This thing of duty reminds me of a song I once heard, in which the singer discussed the merits of a certain bulldog, and stated, that regarding his sociability he, the dog, was all right (a good fellow) when you knew him, but you had to know him first.

The performance of duty is the next easiest thing to tumbling off a log, provided you know what your duty is. You will likely say, "Well, haven't we had duty ding-donged in our ears enough to know what it is by now?" and the answer must surely be, "We have that!" First and last, every pen that ever existed has scratched off more or less theories anent duty, and bards have made it the watch-word of Parnassus. But for all that, how many of us know our duty?

We can point out our neighbors' duty easy enough—can tell him just what to do and just how to do it—and then we can go back to our own homes and see wrong—wrong—wrong in every nook and cranny. The Deacon said truly (though possibly he didn't mean it), "when duty's done, all's done," and we may add, when duty's done wrong, all's done wrong. Sure, it's hard to believe that

such a simple thing as duty *can* be done wrong, and examples to bear out and bolster up our faith come trooping in. For instance, it's the duty of the picket to stay on guard until relieved—and he stays. It's the duty of the sailor to stay on watch until relieved, and he stays. It's the duty of the policeman to stay on his beat until relieved—and he stays, even though somnolently, as *Puck, Judge, et al* aver.

In short, it's everybody's duty to keep their posts until relieved, albeit some may only be relieved by the undertaker. That is undeniable. But how about taking the posts? Man usually does the duty connected with his particular post, and as Mat remarked, no extraordinary credit to him for so doing; but does he fulfill his primary duty in selecting the post? Once on the post, he is no longer a free agent, and he performs his duty under orders. Before that, however, he is master of his destiny, or as much master as fate and environment allow him to be, and, it occurs to me, that first and foremost, his greatest *duty* is to select that post which conforms best to his own and society's weal; and so far as exterior influences permit, he should make it a choice of a clear head and a good heart working in unison, and never one or the other singly.

I once saw an illustrated play-bill of a war drama (one of those shows where everything is real but the acting), and the leading picture represented a youth starting to the front and shouting back to his weeping mother, *"Duty calls me, I must go! ! !"*

That was very patriotic and well calculated to bring down the galleries; but seriously now, had our young hero satisfied himself in which direction duty was calling? Had he gotten duty confounded with glory? Had he grabbed his old muzzle-loader before there was any necessity for abandoning the plow?

Victor Hugo gives us an inspiring picture of those holy women who rendered perpetual adoration unto the Deity. Those nuns had gone at the call of the highest duty, the soul's duty—but had they gone in the right direction? Had they mistaken fanaticism for fervor? Did they expect to help society more by getting out of it than by staying in?

The crusaders, in their fruitless pilgrimages let home and country go to the dickens, and spent years upon years slaying swarthy strangers against whom, in the language of Twain, "they could not have reasonably had the slightest grudge." Did duty call them to an empty sepulchre rather than to the examples of Him who once occupied it.

The young officer off to the war takes unto himself a bride, who on the morow must bid him perhaps a last adieu. Romantic,—hilariously so, when the enemy are picking off shoulder straps with ghastly *sang froid.* Does duty tell him to mix Boots and Saddles and Taps with Mendelssohn's Wedding March, and deliberately hand over a widow and mayhap an orphan to society?

We tie ourselves up with some hobby—use duty's shafts for a double yoke, and start pell-mell down the road of moral philosophy for—God knows where! When glory, romance, love, fanaticism or anything else approaches the guard lines of duty, those good sentries of the brain, Reason, Judgment and Caution, should challenge promptly and decisively, or the camp's taken, and generally sacked.

This is no essay on duty, nor any attempt at one; it is simply the sum and substance of Mat's meditations the Sunday afternoon he returned from Dud's. He had spent the forenoon in a bootless endeavor to bring Dud around on lynching. He had probed to the pith and heart—the very marrow—of the subject. Had advanced

the most unassailable logic to convince his friend. Had forced him to admission after admission; and, finally, when he had come to a stop, Dud poised his fist above the table (they had just sat down to dinner), and declared:

"Granting everything you've said, Mat; granting the Constitutional right of the accused to a fair trial; granting that no power save the law can prescribe capital punishment, and nobody but its officers can administer it; granting that illegal executions shake the basic principles of liberty, and that none are safe where the mob rules; granting that lynching promotes crime, and brutalizes those who engage in it; granting that innocent men are sometimes its victims; granting that lynching for one crime leads the way to lynchin' for *any* crime; granting that it keeps alive sectional discord; granting that it enables the low whites to vent race hatred and ties the best citizens' hands; granting everything, *everything!* and I tell you, Mat Doyle, lynchin' will stop when brutes are no more. Reason may beat her intellectual brow into a pulp against that rock, but she'll never budge it, never while there's a man to avenge this crime of crimes."

The fist came down like a pile-driver, and Dud called into the kitchen:

"Mandy, bring in some more biscuits—I knocked these in forty different directions!" Then he went on:

"No, Mat; I don't want you to vote for me if you don't think I'll make a good Sheriff——"

"But I *do* think you'll make a good Sheriff."

"Then why all this palaver? Anybody'd think I was gettin' ready to join the Republican party."

"Just because I think you'll make a good Sheriff. You

can't afford to mar your many merits by advocatin' lawlessness."

"Oh, the devil an' Tom Walker! Mat, I'll bet that buzzard Hicks has been loadin' you."

"Why, he *is* surprised at the stand you've taken."

"Surprised, my grandmother! He heard me express myself in Uncle Alec McNeil's store last fall. Surprised! H—l! Pshaw, Mat, I'll tell you what's a fact, if you want a real, genuine, long, lingerin', lastin', surprise, *I'm* surprised at your lettin' that ——"

"Now, Dud, I won't, I declare I won't——"

"There, there, there—I'll drop it, Mat; I'll quit and take it all back—but, by the way, if it's a fair question, didn't he write that letter signed 'A Voter?' "

"Yes—I thought you knew it."

"I haven't been off the place—but I jes supposed he wrote it. Are you liable to see him any time before the primaries?"

"I'm to see him to-morrow."

"Well, I wish you'd tell him if he's disposed to champion his side, that I'll take the stump with him in a holy minute."

"All right," answered Mat, smiling.

As he rode back home and indulged in the reflection set forth at the opening of this chapter, Mat heaved a heartfelt sigh and muttered: "Ah-h, hey-y; there's no changin' him, — an' my principles are aginst it — ah-h, hey'y; principle is a powerful treasure to lose,—an' so is friendship—ah-h, hey-y."

The remainder of the ride was a continuation of "ah-h, hey-y,"' and, in fact, he kept it up the balance of the day and all that night, until the women folks asked him at breakfast what was the matter, and wasn't he sick,

and divers other anxious queries, to all of which they received unenlightening negatives and "huhs." It wasn't long, however, before the cause of his worry found its way inside the Doyle home, for Deacon Hicks, being determined to maintain the aggressive, soon had the county stirred up over Dud's "dangerous platform," and drew the lines taut between lynching and anti-lynching. Mat discussed the issue with Hicks on the appointed Monday, and pretty nearly every day for a month thereafter, and still hung between principle and friendship. He felt that give up one he must, and knowing him as we do, we can imagine the conflict of choice. Had their convictions and positions been reversed, Dud would have dismissed it something like this: "Well, I don't believe in lynchin', but, by gamy! I'll not go back on a friend!" Illogical, to be sure, but "by gamy!" lovable. Mat was cast in no such mould; but, mind you, he was not the less Dud's friend. Were it a question of life or death the course of action of either one *could not* be for a moment in doubt. Were Dud weeding the corn and a passerby to call, "Hey, Dud, Mat's dyin'," Dud would jerk the traces loose, make a bridle of his plow line, vault astride the mule or horse, whichever he happened to have hitched, and gallop across the field, ruining corn as he went. Were it Mat, and the passerby to call, "Dud's dyin'," he would have the traces undone without damage, turn his horse and go out between the rows—never breaking down a stalk; and he'd do it all as quickly as Dud, if, not more so. Mat was of the kind (*rara avis!*) who wait on the approval of their judgment, and then act unflinchingly, and nine times out of ten, successfully, unless all odds are against them; whereas, Dud was of those who inspire such lyrics as "The Charge of the Light

Brigade." While Mat was spending sleepless nights and troubled days worrying over Dud's stubbornness, Dud was telling all the boys (for he had begun his canvass): "Oh, Mat's all right; he'll get in line 'ginst July. The Deacon's got him balled up now, but pshaw! Mat Doyle vote ag'inst your Uncle Ral? Why, dad blame his old long-legged time, I'd take him down an' duck him in the creek if he even dreamed of it!"

It is scarcely probable that Mat dreamed of it, for, as I hinted, he had converted his sleeping hours into a protracted walking match between himself, Principle and Friendship; and if the reader is sportily inclined, my advice would be to play Principle straight and hedge on Friendship for the place.

Mat delivered Dud's defi to the Deacon, and the latter concealed his spleen by throwing up his hands and exclaiming: "Me take—stump! All—my time now—good Lord doesn't require—taken up—business—besides too old—too old, my son—bad health,—years—toil; *you* take—stump, *you* are the one,—no, no, don't shake—head. Duty demands—best we can give; *I'll* give—pen—money—prayers—best wishes—all that to defeat Satan; *you* give Matthew Doyle—Matthew Doyle, or give nothin' my son—ab-so-lute-ly *noth*-ing! Good—moral voters all want you—occasion wants you—DUTY—wants you—calls you; run, my son, run! Spotless candidate,—spotless platform,—spotless voters; result?—right up,—wrong down. Faith without works—bad as *vice versa*. Think about it—think about it."

By these and similar urgings would Hicks seek to bring Mat in biting distance of his bait; but days passed, everybody else took one side or the other, and still the

contestants in that nocturnal walking match were no telling how far from the home stretch.

The little teacher said to Mat one evening, as he came in dejectedly from the field: "Mr. Mat, why don't you decide?"

"Huh?" he asked, surprisedly. He had never mentioned that walking match to the home folks. (Miss Hennon had come in under the head of home folks ever since Mother Doyle commenced calling her "Laura," which was a fortnight, or less, after her advent.)

"Why don't you make up your mind? When did you last look in the glass?"

"Sunday."

"Did you think you looked like yourself?"

"I reckon so; I don't know who else I looked like."

"That's some consolation if you're able to joke—but I notice you didn't smile. You've quit smiling, and I don't believe you'd know how to laugh."

"There ain't been anything to laugh about lately—at least, around me."

"I know it—we all know it, and we've all quit laughing, too. You'd better decide one way or the other before we all forget how to laugh."

"You talk about decidin' like it was as easy as—uh—plowin'."

"*Plowin'!* My! If deciding's *that* hard, it's a wonder you're alive. That morning you let me plow a—a——"

"Row?"

"Yes, row—you remember that morning?"

"Umph, huh! The first mornin' we commenced plantin'?"

"Yes; well, I haven't got rid of those blisters yet—see? *Ain't* those nice hands for a teacher!"

The fetching manner in which she used our *ain't* and such like was too much for Mat when he was at himself—let alone now.

"That was the first time you ever done any plowin', wasn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, any *big* plowin'—but I've fiddled around lots in gardens."

"This decidin's the first *big* decidin' I ever done, (and I ain't done *it* yet)—but I've *fiddled* around little decidin's off'n on all my life."

"And can't you manage this?"

"Ain't yet."

"Mother Doyle always says your judgment is surer than an almanac and quicker than a steel trap."

"That's mother; she's disqualified on account o' kinship."

"Not in this case, Mr. Mat, for I've been here long enough to know."

"Much obliged, Miss Hennon, but the facts are all ag'inst me."

"You mean because you're at sea now?"

"Yes'm."

"Maybe you ain't at sea."

"Huh! I'm worse: I'm on an island, 'n been waitin' four weeks for a sail."

"Maybe your eyesight is bad."

"How so?"

"Hasn't Brother Hicks showed you your—your——"

"My duty? Yes, I reckon he has;—my conscience showed me *that* before Brother Hicks did: look here, Miss Hennon, have you ever had a friend? I don't mean kinfolks, or acquaintances, or sweethearts, or anything like that, but a friend—a—you know what I mean."

"Is your friend computable by our standard of value —by the dollar sign?"

"Who? Dud Trenome? I should reckon *not!*"

"Well, I never had one. I'm from New England: that's a big manufacturing country, but they don't make those sort of friends there—at least, not for home consumption."

"Well—uh—then——"

"Then I ain't capable of advising you; is that it?"

"No-o; if you've got any advice, let me have it—I'm plumb out."

"You want to decide on something?"

"Been wantin' to a month."

"Your friend stands in the way?"

"No, no; Dud ain't standin' in the way o' nothin'. It's a question between my friendship for him an' my principle—my duty."

"What is your principle?"

"That lynchin' is wrong."

"And your duty?"

"Not to countenance it."

"Well, I said just now that where I come from they didn't manufacture the kind of friends you spoke of; but they manufacture people who'd never let an easy question like that—er——"

"Balk 'em?"

"Yes, 'balk 'em.'"

"Then if lynchin's an issue, I must, of course, vote ag'inst it?"

"*Vote* against it: *run* against it! What is your vote —one, a unit. What is your influence? From all I've heard around here, your influence is——"

"Oh, I know all that, but——"

"Now, Mr. Mat, I can't argue with you—you're a regular Webster on argument, and even if you weren't, I'd be unable to argue a proposition between duty and anything else. I've never encountered duty *versus* friendship."

"Nor duty *versus* love?"

"You musn't ask questions," she said, blushing.

"Go on, then," he murmured, jotting down and underscoring the blush.

"Well, did you really want my advice?"

"It's all that'll pull me through."

"You won't follow it?"

"See if I don't."

"Do you know man's first duty?"

"Well—uh—it's—it's—uh——"

"It is to be true to God, and God is the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is your conscience. If you have a friend who wouldn't honor you for doing *that,* even though it might possibly involve the loss to him of an office, then he's not your friend."

"Dud Trenome's my friend."

"None readier to believe it than I, and he's my friend because he's yours."

"And yet you say: 'Run.'"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll run, then."

"For duty?"

"Yes—and you."

"Oh—oh—oh—*ain't* you ashamed!"

"Huh! Miss Hennon, if you—uh, that is, supposin' that I—or, I mean——"

"You don't know what you mean. I hear Betty putting supper on the table and you haven't washed yet."

Lippity clip! Lippity clip! Lippity clip! The stretch was reached. Jockey Love brought Principle under the wire a handy winner, and Mat, old, foolish Mat, poor, deluded Mat, who didn't know what a deceiving jockey Love was, mistook a blush and an *"ain't* you ashamed" for a quit-claim deed.

Oh, Duty! Duty! Duty! How a little dash of coquetry does befuddle you!

CHAPTER XV.

LOVE AND PRINCIPLE.

A SATURDAY morning in early March saw Old Man Dodd's post-office well filled. The farmers eight and ten miles out were in, doing their week's trading and getting their corn ground. The other farmers nearer town were in for the latter purpose. The town folks were waiting for the mail to be opened, as the southbound had passed some few minutes. Hicks' hands were lounging about the porch and on the counter, the mill being closed for the day; but over and above all this—for it was a common enough thing to see a crowd around the post-office Saturdays,—you could easily tell that there was a newsy air astir, an air that presaged more than the ordinary gossip or crop talk. The Pike *Avalanche* was published on the morning in question, and on that very morning the *Avalanche* was looked to contain Mat's announcement. Pike County knew the announcement was bound to come, because why? Hadn't Hicks said right out in front of the Baptist Church that "Mat Doyle was the man to make the lynchers walk straight," (a very difficult thing to do when they were tipsy); hadn't Uncle Alec McNeil said, right behind his own counter, that "it most consuredly looked like Mat was a-comin' out"; hadn't Old Man Dodd allowed right on his store porch (which was the only porch he owned), that "ther'd likely be more besides Dud 'fore the pri-marys"; and

hadn't Dud himself—oh, well, Dud hadn't, as you might say, *said* anything; but, then, everybody knew he had had five hundred candidate cards printed, and that unprecedented amount was enough to clinch the matter. Finally, when Bill Ott said, several days before, that it wouldn't hurt to look at next Saturday's *Avalanche,* it was over and done with.

So there they waited around the closed delivery window while Old Man Dodd went through his exasperatingly deliberate untying, stamping and pigeon-holeing. There they waited, some vainly trying to fan a spark of interest in sweet-potato plants and early corn; some trying, as vainly, to decipher the weather chart; some reading, for the fiftieth time, the mail route notice, or a last year's assessor's warning; Bill Ott talking in undertones to one of the mill hands; another mill hand, a young lad of the Ott persuasion, edging over the counter in the direction of a tobacco caddy, while Constable Tobe stood serenely unconscious of the said edging, and every man jack of them with one eye on the delivery window and the other on the front door. When the old man finished sorting out the letters and came to the papers, such another nose-flattening against the little glass squares of the mail boxes by those nearest the window. Those little glass squares had had all kinds of noses flattened against them since their introduction into the post-office, but it was nothing compared to their present trial, and that they didn't give way entirely and tumble backwards, is a great credit to the gentleman who put them in place.

"Click" at last went the shutters, and heads and hands began to be shoved up to the grating, which always completely upset poor Old Man Dodd and rendered any comparative alacrity on his part questionless. While he was

trying to accommodate everybody at once and mildly saying, "Don't hurry, one at a time; I don't believe there's anything for you, Tom—wait a minute, let me look and see," Hicks entered. He had scarcely closed the door and advanced a pace or so before a copy of the *Avalanche* was past the window and Bill Ott cried: "There it is, right under Dud's 'nounce*ment*—what'd I tell you?"

"Read it, Bill," called several, while Hicks pursued his way towards the window.

"Here, Andy, you read it, your eye's younger 'n mine."

Andy took the sheet with a lowering expression on his countenance, and, glancing among the crowd, said: "*Under* Dud's announcement, is it? That's where he'll be at the primaries—under Dud."

Dud's friends laughed at this, and Andy ran his eye over the paper and began: "I hereby announce myself as a candidate for Sheriff of Pike County, subject to the action of the Democratic Primaries. I don't ask the vote of any one advocating mob law. Matthew S. Doyle."

As Andy began to read, the crowd gave him close attention, and only those nearest the door noticed Dud come in; he had but an instant before thrown his bridle over the hitching post.

"That's all right," commented a listener, when the reader finished, "Mat ain't afraid to declare his platform."

"Indeed he ain't! Indeed he ain't, sir," Hicks put in; "good platform, too; goin' to win on it, he! he! he! goin' to show 'em a trick or two; yes, sir; show 'em trick or two."

"Wa-al, Brother Hicks," drawled out one of the old heads, "don't see any need o' Mat hollerin 'fore he's hit. Nobody around Pike wants mob law—at least, I ain't heerd o' any."

"Don't, eh! don't, eh!" snapped Brother Hicks. "Who's runnin' for the Lynchers, hey? Haven't heard o' him, I guess, eh?"

"If you mean me," called Dud, elbowing his way to the rear of the house, while Hicks faced around and became very intent on his mail, feeling, the while, as if a lot of mice were running up his back, "if you mean me, I'm here to tell you, Deacon, and anybody else that wants to hear it, that any man this side o' hell who calls himself a man will kill a rapist like he would a snake. Talk about your platforms, I'm sailin' on *that* one if anybody happens to ask you."

Then he shut his mouth right close and held it so, and, getting his mail, left the store. He had intended to buy some sugar and coffee and such like, but thought as he mounted his pony, "I'll come back this evening and do my tradin'—'twon't do to lose my temper around that psalm singer."

Some of his friends ventured out on the porch in hopes of hearing him express himself on Mat's candidacy, but he was riding down the street at a brisk pace, and, to their amazement, alongside of Mat. One of them poked his head back in and called excitedly: "Boys, there they go together."

All hands rushed for the door, even Old Man Dodd, —though he never got there until it was over with,—and stood gazing after the two horsemen. Sure enough, there was Dud on his pony and Mat on his sorrel, riding side by side, as they had done time and again before. I said amazement just now, but when I remember the expression on the different faces, amazement strikes me as rather tame. However, we'll have to be satisfied with it. I've hunted up all the synonyms of that word, but none

of them fit any better. It is as hard to convey an idea of their looks as it was for them to realize the sight. Uncle Alec McNeil's counters had shaken with fear from the thumpings of Lynchers' and Anti-Lynchers' fists; Old Man Dodd's nail kegs had trembled with alarm as those fists seemed ready—in fact, anxious—to commence thumping on flesh, instead of counters; the telegraph instruments in the depot had rattled with fright when a Lyncher would tell an Anti-Lyncher that "He was here to tell him (the Anti-Lyncher), that he could obtain complete and unequivocal satisfaction from him (the Lyncher), at any time, Sundays included, A. M. or P. M." and in spite of all that, (not to mention Deacon Hicks' intimation that forbearance occasionally ceased to be a virtue, nor Andy's free-for-all statement that Dud's political, physical, moral, or mental match had not yet arrived in Pike by the usual route); in spite of all that, and a great deal more besides, there before them were "the stirrers of the storm," riding as quietly away as though the "tempest they had left behind" was not "yet with lightning warm." There was nothing for it but to shake its head individually and collectively, which the crowd did, and at last Bill Ott threw his stick down, shut up his knife, tossed his quid away, gave Andy a barely perceptible glance and started off towards the pump, where young Dodd joined him. The crowd re-entered the post-office and Old Man Dodd fetched a relieved sigh, for there had been so much counter thumping and "By Goshing" of late, he was ready to hear that the two aspirants for Sheriff had cut each other's throats; which would have been very un-Democratic, as the old man had never known the local Democracy to use their knives on anything but soft pine. Our two friends, meanwhile, rode on. Mat

had met Dud some twenty-five yards from the post-office, and, after shaking hands and turning about, said:

"You got in ahead of me. I thought I'd come down and get your mail and bring it out; I wanted to have a talk with you."

Having made a start, Mat stuck fast, and Dud's "Howdy" left him in the fence corner also. They passed the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, the Doyle place, and turned into the country road in silence, both thinking: "This is the first time since we learnt how to talk that we have been together and couldn't say anything."

Dud busied himself reaching down and tightening his saddle strap, and Mat jerked a switch from a roadside sapling and became deeply engaged in trimming it, peeling it, and, in the end, biting it to pieces. So they rode on, nothing breaking the silence but the striking of a hoof against an occasional stone, or the tattoo of a woodpecker on some nearby tree. Objects they had passed often and had scarce noticed for being busy talking, now, perforce, drew their attention. They marked the varying condition of the growing chops in the roadside fields, but made no comments; and if the harsh cry of a hawk was heard anon, they instinctively turned their heads in its direction, but said naught.

Ordinarily, the distance out to Dud's was a scant three and a half miles, but this morning some necromancer had surely preceded them and trebled it, and candor compels me to say that the length of the ride showed plainer upon Mat's face than Dud's. The former's look of trouble was strikingly evident; the latter was serious, true enough, but serene withal. The only shade of worry apparent on Dud's countenance was caused by the

inexplicability of him and Mat riding together like two mutes.

At last the Trenome fence broke on their sight, then the Trenome field, and finally the Trenome house, and the two turned into a byroad and gained the gate in a canter—glad, heartily glad, the ride was over. Dud swung the big gate around—they had stopped at the barnyard—and said:

"Lemme put Charley up, Mat; it's purty night feedin' time."

"Much obliged, Dud," he replied, in a quicker flow of words than was usual with him, "I'll just turn him loose in the lot—can't stay overly long—got a little work down in the lower field that ought to be looked after."

"Well, you know best, old boy," spoke Dud, removing his saddle and giving Betty's pony a gentle slap; "you know best; but it's purty warm to be a-ridin' back, 'ginst evenin'. But you know best, old feller, you know best," he suddenly repeated, "come in."

Mat looked decidedly as if he didn't know whether he knew best or not, and Dud's repeating it made it seem still more doubtful. Dud was always so ready to argue with Mat on any point just for the "fun o' seein' the old lawyer get wrought up," that this continued "you know best, you know best," made Mat feel guilty. Guilty about what? Why, bless your soul, guilty about a guilty conscience. It grated on his ears worse than if Dud had said, "You're a doggoned, lop-sided, dod-gasted liar—you don't know best!" But nothing of that sort was stated either directly or through the different rules of rhetoric. When Dud said "come in," they both started in. Arriving there, Dud unlocked the door, and, bringing out a couple of chairs, said:

"Sit down, old boy, or maybe you'd like a drink—sit down, anyhow, and I'll get a bucket."

"No, no, Dud; gimme the bucket; you go ahead and light your pipe, old fellow," and away went Mat to the well.

Dud paused while filling his pipe, and a faint twinkle came in his honest eyes. It was gone in an instant, and after lighting up he moved a chair to a cool angle of the porch and sat down. This Chesterfieldian politeness and harmony were too much for him. Here were he and Mat old-fellowing and old-boying each other and agreeing to an undreamt-of extent. Of course, they hadn't ever really been cold or impolite towards one another, nor had they ever failed to harmonize on anything of importance until the lynching question came up. But then, all this palavering was a new thing, as it is to any two old friends. When before had Mat waited to be invited to feed Charley? When before had they bowed and scraped over getting a bucket of water? Time out of number Mat had fed Charley in Dud's stalls without any discussion beforehand, and time out of number Dud had flung himself in a rocker and said: "Find a chair, Mat, plenty o' roostin' places about." But to-day 'twas old boy this and old feller that, until the twinkle in Dud's eyes had hard work to join the general harmony and became grave. It did, though, and Dud was ready for the inevitable when Mat returned. They each drank a dipperful, and then Mat selected a cool place for himself, and, in lieu of smoking, fanned vigorously for a few moments.

"Warm, ain't it?" he remarked.

"Dogged if't ain't; goin' to have a spell of it, too."

"Wouldn't be surprised."

"Takes all the vim out of a feller."

"Yeh, uh."

"Makes a feller feel like findin' shade these days."

"Yeh, uh, that's right."

"But findin' it an' bein' able to keep it's different—only moneyed men, like Wicked Bill, can afford the luxury."

"Huh, that's so; us fellers don't find it overly shady in the field."

"No, nor ridin' these days, either."

BUMP went the talk. Dud's "ridin' these days" referred to his canvassing, and Mat knew it, and though he tugged and strained at his tongue, that essential organ of articulation wouldn't budge—no, wouldn't even emit a faint "yeh-uh." Bump went the talk, and bump it seemed likely to stay, and yet each had wanted the other to make the first lead off. Mat fanned so hard until the honeysuckle vine on the end of the porch behind him rustled, and Dud pumped engine-like wreaths of smoke from his cob, and still—bump! At last that twinkle came slipping back, peeping mischievously out of Dud's eyes. Serious as the situation was, and it was serious, and Dud felt hurt at being antagonized by his oldest friend—but, nevertheless, the humor of their sitting thus struck him keenly. He had that innate appreciation of the humorous which Mat lacked. Mat enjoyed a joke like every other true son of Dixie; but, unlike most of us, he didn't see one until it was put in words; whereas, the essence of it always appealed to Dud. Such a thing as he and Mat sitting together, silent and ill at ease, had never happened before, not even excepting at the funeral of Dud's mother, a half-dozen years since. Then they were not ill at ease, they weren't at odds, as now. Sorrowful as the occasion had been, the two boys felt a calmness

which only the knowledge of iron-bound friendship can make perfect, and so, though they had sat together for hours after returning from the burial, the silence was but the mute consolation, the heavenly language of true, abiding friendship. How different on this morning of Mat's announcement to run against Dud. Neither was at ease, both felt the bands strain, each saw for the first time in his life an opponent before men in the other, and while Mat's eyes showed the thorny tension, Dud's twinkled. "Yes," he thought, "confound 'em, Mat'll look at 'em presently and think I'm raggin' him—dog take his serious time."

But Mat didn't see those "confounded" eyes twinkling, or, if he did, he didn't observe it. He was intensely intent on how to begin that talk he had told Dud he wanted to have. A sort of intuition, or shall I say correct insight, into his friend's nature, told him that Dud wasn't likely to begin it. And his intuition was correct, for Dud felt that *he* had done nothing causing explanation, and Mat already knew *his* platform, so if there was to be any political powwow it was "up to Mat." Thus was Dud thinking when:

"Dud!" said Mat, with startling suddenness, so startling that Dud hastily laid his pipe on the gallery railing and brought his chair to a level and involuntarily asked:

"Huh?"

"Dud, 't ain't no use for us to be fightin' shy this way —we ain't used to it. We ought to be too good friends to be a holdin' back when we're both thinkin' about the same thing. I came over to talk about—or, rather—that is, as you might call it, *explain*, my 'nouncement: come on, now, old feller, and help me out. What do you think about it?"

"Mat, I—I—can't exactly say what I *do* think, uh——"

"Well, what *do* you think?"

"Since you insist, Mat, I—uh—think it's damn funny!" Dud brought the last few words out at terrific speed, and immediately broke off a sprig of honeysuckle and began nibbling it:

"Though, of course," he added, after a long pause, "I guess it don't strike you that away, bein' as you know your reasons an' I don't. I never knowed you do anything yet without knowin' your reasons, and (pause) I (pause) reckon you do this time." But those two pauses were tantamount to saying, "I reckon you do, an' then agin, I reckon you don't."

So Mat took it, for he began earnestly: "Now, Dud, don't misjudge me, I——" his manner was so beseeching and his looks so troubled, that Dud, who had covertly glanced at him, arose quickly and interrupted more quickly,—his recent terrific speed growing in jumps and strides and gallops at every utterance:

"Quit, Mat, quit; you talk like a man that didn't have more'n half sense. Misjudge you! Pshaw! I ain't judged you one way or other. It's a purty time o' day for me to be suspectin' you of underhand motives in runnin' 'ginst me—you, whom I've always known to guide your whole life by pure principles. If there's any wrong motives, it's me who has 'em. I confess to you that I'm runnin' for Sheriff 'cause I'm in politics; I've a hankerin' that way, and regardless of the question, I'm in politics for my own interest. You know that, Mat, for I've never kept anything from you; but I don't mean, on that account, that I ain't sincere in my *present* stand. I am sincere —everything I've said on lynching come straight from my convictions. Yes, I am sincere, but that don't cut no

figger in the main point. I run for Sheriff 'cause I'm inclined that way; why, shucks! didn't I announce 'fore all this hurrah started? Course I did, so that goes to prove what I'm out for, whereas with you—why, Mat, there ain't a man in Pike who believes in your sincerity more'n I. Talk about misjudgin' you—misjudgin' be d—d! Your motives are way beyond and above mine; your past life, your life to-day is proof of that even if I didn't know you so well. Simply because I don't see your reasons right at once, is that misjudgin'? What I meant was this, old boy, an' nothing else, an' it's what I've told you all along. That scoundrel Hicks—yes, I will call him a scoundrel, an' a damn scoundrel at that—I say that scoundrel Hicks was the one who started this rumpus. All Pike give it up that I was the logical man for Sheriff; you yourself have said all along that I'd stick by my oath of office, our politics agreed, so where was there any issue? There warn't any, none at all, none at all, until the Deacon manufactured one. Lynchin'! That's an issue, ain't it! I stated my views on it long ago—you stated vours, and after all was said and done, to my notion, we agreed on the main point. Not so with Hicks. He had a purpose, I thought, in antagonizing *me*—I see now it's in runnin' *you*. I was fool enough to think at first he didn't like me on general principles, and wanted to see me beat. But that's all rot, bosh, stuff! Hicks wouldn't harm his worst enemy unless there was some pecuniary gain to be got out of it; when that's at stake, though, why the shunk'd kill his mother and sell her body to a medical school. So I told you, and repeat it, that there's dollars somewhere in sight in this thing for Hicks, whereabouts I can't see now, but I tell you solemnly, an' I've told you before, that Hicks is *usin'* you, *usin'* you, Mat. That's why I said I

thought your 'nouncement was damn funny. After I've told you that, differ with me all you please on informally stringin' a rapist, but not to let Hicks *use* you, why, you go an' run your good old foolish head right in it—you seem to throw a doubt on my sincerity an' run 'ginst me. I know what a feller you are for principle, Mat, an' I know that in follerin' a right principle you are no more a respecter of persons than Hicks is in follerin' wrong ones. I admit it kinder struck me hard to think that my oldest an' best friend 'd be my opponent, but I understand it's a matter over and above such things with you, an' I respect your position; but I must repeat, Mat, that in view of my warnings about Hicks, your 'nouncement is damn funny, *damn* funny, Mat."

Mat had arisen during the foregoing and when Dud finished, the two boys stood facing silently a moment. Then the former held out his hand:

"Shake it, old feller," he said, somewhat thickly; "shake it, though I don't deserve as much—now I don't!" he declared emphatically, as Dud's lips formed something like "O, pshaw!"

"You did misjudge my motives," he went on, hurriedly, through fear of that incredulous "O, pshaw!" "Yes you did, old feller, but in the wrong direction, and I have done you a grievous injury to think, to even think, you thought I've acted, uh—acted sorter out of my usual way; but, Dud, your confidence in my motives has upset me, has shown me what my own vanity has been concealing all along. I've been lying to myself—yes, don't stop me, old feller, I'm not crazy, I'm not talking at 'ranulddom,' as Uncle Alec McNeil says; I'm just penitent, and want to make a clean breast of it. I say, I've been trying to fool myself into believin' that the principle, and the prin-

ciple alone, of this lynch question, is the sole cause of my announcement, but your words just now have unmasked me to myself, and I'm goin' to tell you right here an' now, Dud, that it ain't me at all——"

"Enough, enough, Mat, I know it; I know it. Did you think I'd suppose you'd ever go ag'inst me to this extent unless 'twas somebody——"

"Hold on, Dud; it ain't the somebody you think; you know you always said it'd take a powerful somebody to move me, so it ain't Hicks, an' that's why I said you were misjudgin' me. No, old feller, it ain't Hicks, although I think you are way wrong in your estimate of him, but that aside, it ain't him—it's—uh—well, to be plain and honest about it, an' I give you my word I haven't come to the conclusion until just now, that is, well, as you might say, haven't acknowledged the conclusion—it's Miss Hennon."

I ought to say that Dud acted like he was shot, and recoiled, and did other things consistently with the way of the orthodox pen—but he didn't. He merely repeated "Miss Hennon" once in a surprised sort of way, and then said, laughingly:

"Oh, I see it—ha!—she's worked on your Christian side—she's commenced the home mission work on you. I'm the bad man who's the friend of the Ott gang, and she's picked out the only man in Pike who kin down me an'——"

"No, no; not that, Dud, don't wrong her, she has never said one word against you, not one word. I meant that my love for her——"

This time Dud did recoil.

"Your—love—for—her; why, why didn't you tell a feller?"

There was agony in that question.

"His love for her," and he hadn't told his best friend. "Oh, the deuce and Tom Walker," Dud was thinking, when Mat put his hand out and said:

"Don't be hurt, Dud; I haven't been hiding it because I was afraid to tell you—because I had any underhand scheme, but jes simply because I didn't want to make you feel good without cause. If there is a living creature who can enjoy *my* joys out of pure disinterested motives, you are that one, an' I knew if I told you 'fore I was sorter sure, like, and then it all fell flat, why you'd take it to heart nigh as much as me. So I've waited until I've felt that she loved me, too."

Dud said nothing. He could find no words just then. Hypocrisy was not among his faults. He shook Mat warmly by the hand and looked that old honest look out of his old honest eyes that told Mat he was with him—but his tongue was silent. He took a turn up and down the porch and finally halted before Mat, and asked:

"She loves you?"

"Dud, I wouldn't have announced for the race if I hadn't thought so."

"Does she want you to run?"

"She told me she thought it was my duty."

"And you believe she loves you, old boy?"

"I do, Dud."

"Then—then——" but he got no further. Another stop—but this time a silent one. Another turn, and Mat saw that familiar mood come over his friend, which he knew so well, so he went up, and, laying his hand lightly on Dud's shoulder, said:

"I'll be goin', old feller; if you want to arrange speakin'

dates we can get together to-morrow when you're in town. Don't think, Dud—but then I know you won't—"

Dud stopped him with a silent gesture, and said:

"I'll see you to-morrow, Mat. Stay to dinner?"

"No—got that job in the lower field."

"Well," they were walking towards the lot, "we can fix dates to-morrow."

They shook hands warmly. Mat mounted his horse, and as Dud closed the big gate after him he turned in the saddle and waved a friendly good-day. Dud waved back and called the simple old Southern invitation:

"Come back agin."

"All right; you come," sang out Mat.

"Yes,—I can come *now*," said Dud to himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAGNANIMITY.

When Mat and Dud rode away from Old Man Dodd's, leaving Whittledom transfixed with astonishment, Bill Ott, as remarked in the last chapter, beckoned Andy Dodd away. The almost imperceptible nod was noticed by the ever-alert Ott outfit, and the knowing ones, who comprised pretty night two-thirds of the outfit, rightly inferred that something more important than tapping a jug or planning a chicken roast was on the boards.

The entire outfit usually acted as a council on fixing crap and seven-up dates: Bill, Andy and Pedro were generally the Board to act upon poultry raids and shoat liftings. But when William the Godless, and Young Dodd betook themselves to a whispered conference, then, indeed, was expectation rife. Only once before had such a portentious powwow occurred, and that was the night a traveling show had exhibited at Pike, and after an enthusiastically patronized performance, had retired to rest. The following morning horses, harness, wagon seats, gasoline tanks and all other portable properties, except the tent, and the artists themselves, were gone, and it consumed the entire treasury of the company to recover their goods and chattels. After their departure, the outfit enjoyed a gala time until various recently and mysteriously acquired sums of money once again changed hands.

So Constable Tobe and his cohorts stayed out on the

porch and peeped around the corner of the store in the direction of the pump, watching every gesture of the two leaders, and hoping that whatever the game in hand it would pan out a spree for them. And though those interested spectators did not watch from any contemplative standpoint, it was a picture well worthy of such a view. One seeing the two men together for the first time could not but be forcibly struck by the contrast—such a contrast! Andy Dodd, tall, handsome, well-made, lithe, high forehead, strongly defined facial characteristics, lustrous, seemingly honest, brown eyes—everything, every sign, every indication, pointing to good stock and causing the stranger to exclaim: "That fellow can point with pride to his forefathers!" (and if the stranger but knew it, that was a sight more than his forefathers could do to him). Then to glance from the younger to the older man, and wonder, on a close inspection, whether he really was a man. Wicked Bill, low in stature, as in morals; shoulders bent in as though he was perpetually trying to hide; a thick neck in which the drink-swollen veins were fairly visible through an indefinite accumulation of dirt; a perfectly round head, but always thrust down and forward in an attitude suggestive of eavesdropping—in which its owner was a past master; gray-yellow-brindle eyes, that defied scrutiny, but observed the faintest rustle of a leaf through their constant squint; an upper row of discolored teeth protruding from his mouth, but pointing inwards, reminding one of a squirrel;—and the mouth! If ever a sewer carried the very scum of scum, filth of filth, through its polluted course to, at last, infect the atmosphere with foul gases, Bill Ott's mouth was the cloaca. He used the most varied assortment of vile articulation that ever issued

from human or inhuman being, and he vomited his filth wherever his fancy ventured .

The summing up of a comparison between Bill and Andy must of necessity—sad though it is—be the same old story, —the eagle mates with the buzzard, not to lift him up, but to be dragged down. Andy, to become what misguided youth deems *a man,* had selected the most dissolute creature he could find for a model. I use the word selected with due deliberation, notwithstanding it is the fashion among grieving mammas and pious, but powerfully provincial, pastors to charge the full infamy of Andy's undoing up to Wicked Bill. It were an insult to a youth of Andy's nature, intellect, and ability to say that he had blindly suffered himself to be netted—and an admission that Nature has no aristocracy. Andy, in his fledgling days, possessed more philosophic comprehension than was ever dreamt of by an Ott, young or old. If your blue grass colt desires to repudiate the breeding of its gallant sire and noted dam, and take up with a scavenger's plug, it does so in spite of itself and not because of superior attractions, either in the plug or in the wretched career the plug leads. The identical principle is applicable to Andy, and hence I shall not waste any tears over his choice: suffice to say, he adopted Bill for his preceptor, and we all know that the corps of teachers in Experience's school is a high-salaried body, and much given to the applied system, *i. e.,* the system used by the monkey who let his feline scholar extract the chestnuts from the fire.

"Oh, it's the best thing for us that could a-happened," Bill was saying in undertones to Andy.

"I'm d—d glad he's goin' to run; Dud won't do a thing to him, d—n his sanctimonious hide!" commented Andy.

"I don't keer a d—n 'bout that; what we want is to git

Tobe made deputy, an' then we'll have things comin' our way."

"Well, h—l, Dud'll make Tobe his deputy—Mat's sure for the church vote, an' by G—! Dud'll need us or he's gone to h—l!"

"He's *got* to have us 'n what we want to do is to see him right away."

"Well, Bill, don't you think if we hold up an' let on like we *might* all vote for Mat that there'd be somethin' in it, besides Tobe's appointment?"

"H—l, no! Dud knows us fellers too well; they ain't no bluffin' him there, an', 'sides, what th' h—l do you want? Tobe's appointment means cash to us. By the way, you owe Tobe ten, don't you?"

"It's thirteen sixty, countin' last night's losin'."

"Well, there's one gain a-ready; git Dud's promise o' the 'pointment an' I'll make Tobe square it off. Why, boy, if we don't do somethin' like that, fust thing *we* know, the Grand Jury'll be raisin' seventeen kinds o' hell! Hicks 'n his gang 'd be tickled to death to git Mat."

"Oh, to h—l with Mat; he ain't deuce high himself—he couldn't tell what we were doin' if he was to run up on us; he don't know one card from another; but it'd be just like him to get a deputy who'd nail us first dash out."

"There's where *you* missed it, Andy; if you'd got in with him, why you an' Betty could a-been tied up 'ginst now an' you'd a-been Mat's deputy—an' Jee-*sus!* what a hog-killin' time we would a-had!"

"Oh, well, don't you fret about my gettin' Betty, all right enough—even if I'm never deputy sheriff. Betty thinks that —— —— —— —— —— —— of a brother of hers is prepared stuff, but jes wait till she's Betty Dodd."

"Ha, ha, ha! You'll show her how to roll box cars, hey?"

"That's no lie."

"Well—come on; Mat'll bout ride out there 'n start back 'ginst we git to the house—'n we'll go by Fritz's anyway 'n take on some oats; come along. Oh, Tobe!"

"Hey?"

"Me an' Andy's goin' somewhere."

"A' right; we'll be here or down—you know."

"Umph, huh."

"Don't forgit to bring us back three fingers in the washtub."

"Ha! Where's your money?"

Bill and Andy put off through the woods, stopping at Fritz's, a gentleman of Teutonic extraction, who dispensed a decoction of grape and alcoholic extraction,—and then winding their way across country until Dud's fences appeared through the trees. After a short reconnoitre they saw that Mat hadn't yet gone, so they lay down in the underbrush not far from the road, and with a social jug of Fritz's vintage between them, waited. When at last Mat and Dud came out to the lot and Mat rode away, the interior of the jug had gradually become a yawning vacuum, and its pair of imbibers were in neither a particularly temperate nor docile frame of mind, and heaped enough imprecations upon Mat for keeping them waiting to have run Bill a whole day and night.

Bill and Andy had settled it for the latter to "see" Dud, or, that is, Bill had settled it and Andy had agreed to it. They gave Mat good time to get away and then looked for Dud to re-enter the house; but he flung his arms over the gate and leaned his head on them, and remained motionless so long that they thought he had gone to sleep, and began to switch their abuse from Mat to

him. But he raised up at length and Bill, whose squint was as telescopic as keen, exclaimed under his breath:

"Good God! The feller's sick!"

Just then Dud turned and began pacing up and down the horse lot in a manner to cause the smothered remark from Andy:

"That don't look much like a sick walk."

Sick or not, the walker kept it up until Bill observed that "they'd a-brought two gallons an' some sow-belly if they'd a-known they wuz agoin' to have to camp."

While the walk was seemingly no nearer conclusion than when first started, Dud suddenly wheeled to the left flank and entered his house. Bill arose and said:

"Come, Andy, we're late now; less go down a piece an' then you start back up the road. I'll wait at the corner of the field."

The willing cat followed his mentor, and some three or four hundred yards toward Pike they emerged into the road, and young Dodd turned his face back in the direction of the Trenome dwelling. He walked on, rolling a cigarette, and coming in sight of Dud's house, looked over in the field, then around the barn, and so on, as though Dud might be most anywhere about the place or might not be about the place at all as far as he knew. When he arrived at the gate he called:

"Hello!"

No reply.

"Hello!"

Still no answer.

"The devil!" he thought, "wonder if he *is* gone," and then he shouted:

"Whoo-ee! Anybody home?"

"Come in, Andy," called Dud, leaning out of a front

window, "didn't know anybody was out there; come in, you know the dogs."

Andy advanced up the walk and noticed that it had been recently graveled and sideboarded. Dud met him at the gallery and, shaking hands, invited him in. On entering the sitting room he glanced towards a desk and observed writing materials displayed. Dud followed the glance and said:

"I was busy doin' a little writin'—don't reckon I'd a hardly heard it thunder."

Andy sat down and Dud did likewise, and then, for the first time, it struck Andy that Dud didn't look exactly well, but he was full of his mission, and had little time to speculate on aught else.

"Well, Dud," he began, "we're all upset in town."

"That so?"

"We never expected to hear of you and Mat Doyle runnin' 'ginst one another."

"Yes?" asked Dud, though from the absent way in which he said it he might as well have used any other monosyllable.

"The boys don't think Mat's right," Dodd pursued.

"No?"

"You started first."

"Umph, huh."

"An' as far as I'm concerned, *I'd* vote for you if you hadn't."

"Much obliged."

"And I believe Bill Ott an' all his friends could be made to do it—anyways they ought to."

"Yeh—reckon so."

"Specially if Tobe ever expects to get higher than constable."

"That's right."

"An' for the matter o' that, he *would* make a first-rate deputy."

"Spec so."

This was discouraging to Andy. Dud neither appeared to listen nor to care much about listening, and his short answers, while civil and friendly enough, were so many stumps in the way. Young Dodd smoked away viciously for a minute or so, and then came out with his proposition. Fritz's wine (?) had put him in a hasty temper, and his temper at best was none too meek.

"Dud, you stand O. K. with our crowd."

"Your crowd?"

"Er—Bill's crowd."

"Oh!"

That "Oh!" was a terrible jab, being tantamount to saying: "Andy, you know you don't belong in that crowd." But the "Oh!" stopped there, and Dud felt really surprised in evincing that much interest in the matter.

"And, Dud," Andy pursued, "you can get every one of our votes, *sure*—but, of course, we'd like to see Tobe made deputy."

Silence.

"We don't know whether you've picked your deputy."

Silence.

"There ain't another deputy who could bring you the votes Tobe can."

"I don't need him."

"You don't need him! Why, h—l, Dud, Mat'll beat you."

"No, Mat won't beat me."

Fritz's wine commenced to boil at the idea of anybody getting an office in Pike independent of "the boys."

"Mat won't beat you? You're drunk!"

"Ha! Blamed if I don't feel like it."

"Or crazy."

"Guess you're right."

"Oh, come now, Dud—you were jes jokin'?"

"Nope—I don't need Tobe—an' if he's sent you here to beg for him, tell him so."

"Well, you're beat."

"That's my business."

"You're the doctor, Dud; what time is it?"

"Four ten."

"H—l, I'll be night gettin' in."

"Stay all night here."

"Thanks—got a small game up to-night—good-by. You'd better change your mind an' not drop the boys."

"Andy, you'd better change *your* mind an' drop 'em—you talk about your *small* games—you're too big game for that crowd o' hounds—'n the sweetest girl in Pike your sweetheart, too—it's a d—n shame, that's what it is!"

Andy half-opened his lips and looked as though Dud's unexpected waking up had angered him, but he merely said:

"So long."

When he came upon Bill he jerked his thumb backwards and said:

"N. G."

"What!"

"No go."

"G— d—n him!"

"Oh, he's beat."

"Beat; yes, beat right now. Less go back an' see Mat 'fore night."

"What you want to see *him* for?"

"Why, 'bout Tobe—you're drunk a-ready?"

"He'll never have Tobe."

"Oh, I don't know; we'll try him a few anyhow."

"D—d if *I* see him! That's straight."

"Yes you will, Andy."

"No; I'll be ——"

"No, no, you won't be nothin' of the kind; look a-here, boy, do you wan't to go up?"

"Nixey."

"Well, if Tobe ain't deputy we'll all lose a mighty good chance, if we ain't sent up."

By the time they came near the Doyleses, Bill had made good his prediction, and Andy proceeded the last two hundred yards alone, leaving his confederate to enter town through the woods. The sun was sinking low in the heavens when he halted at the gate and halloed for Mat. Betty came to the door and called him in, but he declined, saying he'd wait out front. Betty replied:

"Mat hasn't got up to the house yet—he's been at work in the lower field—let me see if he's comin'; it's supper time," and she stepped to the end of the porch and looked down past the barn.

"I'll go on around the lane, Bet, and meet him," Andy said, starting off, and he began to feel more than ever the tonic effects of Fitz's beverage.

Betty remained on the gallery watching him go up the lane, and observing, the closer he got, that he avoided her look and appeared in, to her, a rather familiar condition. She ran through the house and out the back way and met him as he came opposite the side gate.

"What do you want with Mat, Andy?" she asked.

"Jes' a little business—politics."

"Oh! you better stay to supper; Mat'll be up presently. You look like you been walkin'."

"Have."

"Well, come in an' wash up for supper; Mat'll be glad for you to stay."

"Ain't got time, Bet—I don't reckon Mat'll grieve much 'bout my not stayin'."

"You wrong him, Andy—he's your friend."

"*Yes, I reckon so!* I'll take your word for it."

"There, I hear him now."

Andy turned hastily, and seeing Mat undoing the lot gate leading to the field, stepped away in that direction. Mat brought his horse in and closed the gate, and on facing around beheld young Dodd approaching.

"Howdy, Andy," he greeted, holding out his hand.

"H'y, Mat," responded Andy, taking the hand and letting it fall before giving it a shake, and inquiring, "Can I help you?"

"No, I'll have him out and fed in no time—go ahead in the house—I'll be there—"

"Thanks—ain't got but a minute or so; wanted to see you; been huntin' for you all day, but heard you were out to Dud's. The boys asked me to bring you word that they were all for you."

"The boys?"

"Yes—Bill Ott an' his friends."

"Why, I thought *those* boys were all 'ginst my platform."

"Oh, as far as lynchin' goes, you know, Mat, there ain't any of us who are particular 'bout what route a nigger takes to glory."

"Yes, I understood as much; and you all are no more particular now than ever?"

"'Course not—but that don't cut no—"

"Excuse me for interruptin' you, Andy, but it cuts a figure with me. Have you read my 'nouncement?"

"Yes."

"Are you and Bill Ott's friends prepared to denounce mob law?"

"Not when it concerns stringin' a nigger."

"Then I would much rather you and Bill Ott's friends vote 'ginst me."

"H—l, Mat, that ain't no way to look at it. Do you expect to win on a nigger lovin' platform? Why, G—d—n it—"

"Andy, don't take God's name in vain around me."

"Free country, ain't it?"

"Yes, but don't do it again. I'm obliged for your offer and I'd like to have all your votes—but I can't accept 'em and us differin'."

"What's that got to do with it? If you aim to beat Dud, why our votes'll do it. Why, for the matter of that, we could run a third man an' beat both of you, for you an' Dud'll jes' split your own strength, an' we could come in with Tobe Ott, for instance, 'n bring him through in a walk."

"Do it then."

"But we don't want no hard feelin's—"

"Huh! There needn't be any. Tobe's got a right to run same as Dud or me, 'n if he's sure of it, he's foolish not to."

"We ain't hoggish—Tobe'd be satisfied with bein' deputy."

"Is that what you wanted to see me about?"

"Well, since you ask it—*yes*."

"Look here, Andy Dodd, you're the first man who ever proposed a dishonorable action to me."

"Don't reckon I'll be the last since you gone in politics."

"It'll be the last one *you'll* ever propose. This ain't my place—if it was I'd order you off—but don't you ever speak to me agin."

"Why, G—"

Mat deftly ran his hand back of Andy's shirt collar and said:

"Keep your hand out of your pocket; I don't care to fight you. I asked you not to blaspheme around me—"

"An' I'll blaspheme as much as I G—"

"What's the matter, boys?" broke in Betty. She had been noticing them from the kitchen window while she was taking up supper, and when Mat grasped Andy she hurried out.

"Nothin', Betty," said her brother.

"Nothin'?" echoed Andy, twisting desperately, "Take your hand off me and I'll show you, you G—," but he never finished it. Mat could have easily beaten him down like a dog, but he merely stopped his mouth and led him to the lane gate. Betty had it wide open for him and exclaimed, furiously, "Don't spare him, Mat!" But Mat, the roadside reached, released his hold and walked back—giving Andy full opportunity to knife him from behind, which, however, Andy failed to do. Betty threw her arms around her brother and said, vehemently:

"I'll never speak to him until he apologizes for insultin' you."

"It wasn't me—it was God he insulted."

"He's a—a—"

"Hold on, Betty, you know mother's motto—*'Judge not'*—I see one o' Dud's hands out front—h'y, Ed—want to see me?"

"Yes, sir—heah's a letter heah—Mister Dudley says there warn't no answer."

"'Light anyhow, Ed—go back in the kitchen—you can have supper presently."

The darkey got down from his horse and brought the letter to Mat, and the latter opened it as he and his sister returned to the house. Coming to the steps he said:

"Go on in, Bet, I'll be there directly."

When Mat finished the page and glanced up he observed Miss Hennon in the doorway.

"Step here," he requested, "and read this."

She read: "Dear Mat: The example of true principle you have always set me would be ill requited if I should, after our life-time friendship, fail to profit by it. Since our talk to-day what I should do is plain before me, and, far from hesitating to do it, I feel gratified in being able to give you some little proof that I am not a bad debtor—for you know well, old boy, that I am indebted to you for what there is of good in me.

"I withdraw to-day from the race for Sheriff and, far from feeling any loss, I feel I have gained—and so you must feel the same, and accept my vote and support in the spirit it is tendered. Believe me, inasmuch as *I* am the only one vitally interested in my candidacy, that my withdrawal can cause no disappointment to *any one,* so long as it has the happy sanction of your friend, Dud."

When Miss Hennon silently handed the paper back to Mat he said, slowly:

"That's—what—I—call—the—soul—of—"

"Magnanimity," completed the little teacher.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANDY DODD, GENT.

Dud's withdrawal caused Whittledom, and, indeed, all Pike—town and county—to lose interest in the Sheriff's race. Of course, it was merely a bluff on Andy's part that Tobe Ott had any serious idea of running. Beyond the outfit, who controlled the town precinct, Tobe couldn't have raised a corporal's guard as against any one man, though had Dud remained in the race, there is no doubt but that disaffected voters would have gone over to the "dark horse." As it was, Mat was nominated, and, six weeks later, elected and duly installed in office. Dud gained universal odium by what Pike thought was his milk-and-water policy. His erstwhile staunchest supporters drew off from him in dudgeon, and allowed that "they wuz derned glad he showed his lack o' sand while the game was young; for they'd 'a hated powerful bad to help 'lect a Nancy for Sheriff." The idiots little kenned the magnanimity that had inspired Dud's move, or the moral courage it had taken to consummate it: true disinterestedness was as foreign to them as it is to your tailor-made cit. Dud, with the Ott wing back of him, would have been invincible, and for a man to hand over an office to his antagonist in that manner was well-nigh inexplicable to those constituents, whom our politicians are prone to denominate "the *incorruptible* yeomanry."

But Dud had no explanations or apologies to offer. He

still kept close at home, albeit the repairs on his place stopped. There were those who prophesied that he would be Mat's deputy, especially the Ott outfit; but, to Pike's amazement, Mat took the reins of office in hand without a deputy. He said it was nonsense, and a waste of money, and he didn't intend having one except during his tax-collecting trips, and he made good his intention. True, it gave him plenty to do; but he said that was what he looked for, and he didn't suppose the State could make any sort of an out hiring do-nothings,—he found he never could on the farm.

Deacon Hicks kept getting more and more rushed with business, and scarcely had time to stop by the Court House and say "Morning" to "Sheriff Doyle," as he was fond of dubbing him.

So the fall began to glide away into winter, and when Mat went on his first collecting trip, lo! all Pike County stood agape—he wore a brand new necktie, *week days* as well as *Sundays*. The old heads allowed that "he sartinly wuz a-gittin' stuck up quicker'n the average, 'n if he stayed in thar two terms he'd be a-wearin' a long-tailed 'behavior' 'n a plug hat—he would, *by gum!*" The good Deacon smiled way up his sleeve and stated, for his part, that it was no Sheriff's office that ever bought that cravat, no, sir; and that whatever *was* the cause of its appearance, they could expect a wedding ring from the same source some time in the not-far-distant future. He made it a point to deliver that and like remarks where Mat could accidentally overhear them; for instance, after meetings, or on mill days, or in the post-office; and it frequently happened that (by chance, purely), he would saunter arm in arm part of the way home with Mat of an evening and cite him case after case where friends of his back East had married and

settled down in business; and, with Aladdin-like alacrity, had overtaken Dame Fortune in her most smiling humor, and had not neglected their mothers and sisters, either; it seemed they all had mothers and sisters. And (to out with the whole thing), Mat, from merely listening, or murmuring "Huh," came to inquiring the names of those friends, and who they married, and how their mothers and sisters liked it, and what sort of businesses they embarked in; and, upon Brother Hicks remembering, singularly enough, three out of four times, that it was the lumber business, Mat became very thoughtful. Then would Setton retire to his sanctuary, and inwardly contemplate the beatitudes of perseverance, and call to mind that Scottish legend of how another spider had crawled out of a hole after persistent climbing.

One evening in November, Dud had just sat down before his fire and began to fall into a gentle reverie to the accompaniment of a melancholy north wind without. It was one year, precisely, since the time he had stayed all night at Mat's and met *Her,* and he thought: "There can't be no great sin in my rememberin' it, an 'sort o' dreamin' about it, like; nor no harm to Mat; it's only a memory, an' he's got her before him in life 'n *for* life, too."

There came a tap at his door, and he called:

"Come."

One of his hands entered with the mail, having just returned from town.

"Cold out, Ed?" asked Dud, listlessly taking the package.

"Yessir; 'spec there'll be a heavy frost 'fore mawnin'."

"See any o' Mister Mat's folks?"

"No, sir; Mister Mat's gone to town."

"City?"

"Yessir; him and Deacon Hicks; everybody says they done gone into pa'dnership."

"Partnership in what?"

"Sawmillin', I reckon, sir."

"Don't see what they wanted to go up to the city for to draw up a partnership—lawyers here."

"I heerd Old Mister Dodd a-sayin' that *he'd* a-loaned Mister Mat all he wanted on his ma's place, if he'd a-had his pension money, 'n so I calculated——"

"Yes, yes; that's about it; that's about it; ah-hey—I shan't want anything else to-night, Ed. Did you rub the horse down?"

"Yessir; got plenty o' wood?"

"Plenty; I'm goin' to bed early."

"Good night, sir."

"Night, Ed."

When the door closed Dud repeated:

"Yes, that's jes' about it: gone up to mortgage, 'n, by ganny! that's what Hicks was raisin' such a hullabaloo for last spring. I' gad! he'll be in clover, now; he'll keep Mat busy in the Sheriff's office 'n make the poor fellow believe *anything*. May not turn out as I suspect, but I'm mightily 'fraid. Mat's *so* easy—an' good; if he was mean like me, he'd keep an eye out for that psalm singer. Ah-hey—well, it's no time for my 'put,' even if it was asked, which it ain't been. An' so Old Man Dodd would 'a—ha! poor old feller, that blamed pension'll be as near to him when he's cold as it is now—'n I guess it's better that way, for no tellin' what kind o' devilment Andy wouldn't stir up with a couple o' thousand—it's a shame 'bout that boy!"

Then he relapsed into his reverie, and sat as still as though sleeping until long after the fire had flickered down to a few sparkless embers.

Little though Dud or anyone else expected it, a letter was then *en route* to Old Man Dodd, bearing the news the old postmaster had so long striven and hoped for, and when the new firm of Hicks and Doyle returned from the city next morning they found Pike in a state of unprecedented uproar. The morning's mail had brought a communication from the Pension Office at Washington, stating that a treasury draft, covering all back payments due on pension number so-and-so, would, in due and early course, be sent to A. B. Dodd, said draft being Uncle Sam's testimonial for certain services rendered him by A. B. Dodd under Taylor in the forties—a long time—a regular Rip-Van-Winkle time for our Uncle to be waking up—but, better late than never. Oh, the Pecksniffs and Bumbles who materialized by the time the draft arrived! Oh, what a fine pension it was! Oh, how they all *knew* that it had been merely a question of time until it should come, though nobody ventured to say just how long a time! Oh, what a lovable old gentleman Old Man Dodd became! Oh, how many petticoats were ready to sacrifice themselves and take charge of the dear old gentleman's domestic affairs—poor dear—he had been a widower *so* long! Oh, how "interestin'" Andy became! Oh, wasn't it a pity he and Betty were "out"! Oh, if he and Betty couldn't be brought "in," wouldn't the young petticoats cheerfully undertake to reform him! Oh, my, wouldn't they! And, oh! wasn't it a shame such a smart lad had to run a mill engine—awful shame! Wouldn't a nice business be the thing for him—the *very* thing! So said "Dear" McNeil; so said Uncle Alec McNeil; and then they looked at Winnie and repeated "the very thing!" and rolled the tid-bit in their mouths, and became real loving—just *too* loving for any use!

"Go 'long, McNeil," said "Dear," pinching his ear.

"Lord bless my soul, dear!" declared Uncle Alec McNeil (who didn't "go 'long"); "I'd jes give *anything* to help 'Andy. Why, gracious alive! I'd jes turn him over *my* business—jes give it to him, y-e-s, umph, huh—hee-ha-hey!"

"Oh, McNeil, you're *so* liberal! He! he! he!"

"No, 'pon my soul, geeminee! the money that boy could make! Dear, can't you fix up a nice little supper to-night—some chicken, 'n pie, 'n beat a few eggs, 'n have a little real old-time egg-nog. Lord-a-mercy! I'll be bound Andy 'd like a little egg-nog."

"Go right down, McNeil, and tell him—jes *make* him come—*he* needn't be afraid of his old Aunty McNeil; an' tell him about the egg-nog—he can jes have it *all* to himself."

"Y-e-s, dear; and we'll have *him* all to ourselves, hee, ha, hey! Lord bless my time!"

"Go 'long, McNeil—an' here, take him two o' these cigars you've had on hand since last Christmas."

"Cert'inly, cert'inly, dear; what a dip—dip—"

"Dipper?"

"Hee! No, no, dear! dip—dip—oh, shucks—dip-low——"

"Oh, tut, McNeil! Diplomat's what you're thinkin' of—diplomat's a forrener."

"*Is* it? Well, I must a meant—oh, yes, yes, yes, I got it turned 'round—diplomat's a forrener, an' an emigrant—*that's* what I was a-gittin at—an emigrant's a——"

"Land sakes, McNeil! Take them cigars on down to that dear boy—an *emigrant!* Don't you know an *emigrant* is a varmint, between the size of a muskrat 'n a 'possum—*idea* o' callin' me an emigrant!"

"Hee! ha! hey! Well, you're a—a——"

"Oh, hurry, McNeil; some o' those wicked, low-down Ott's 'll be tryin' to lead poor Andy off."

"I'm gone, then—don't forgit to charge them cigars to —lemme see——"

"I'll charge 'em to Dud Trenome——"

"But he don't use 'em."

"Well, he uses *coffee*, don't he? McNeil, you're gettin' dull—powerful dull; 'n jes when you ought to be sharpest."

"I'll sharpen up 'ginst to-night," and out he shuffled, leaving "Dear" immersed in streams of blissful speculation.

What was the upshot of all this Pecksniffianism and Bumbledumism? If the reader has read Andy's nature aright, the upshot was not whether it made a fool of him, but how big a fool it made. Without pausing to consider that that most powerful of all lubricators, money, had greased the hinges of his flatterers' knees, and without seeming to recollect that those very flatterers, and, first and foremost, the McNeils, had, up to the morning of the Pension Office notification, been his most consistent abusers, he opened his maw like a young catbird, and gulped down the gobs of sickly sycophancy, all the while crying, like the birdling: "Pee wee! More yet! Pee wee! More yet!"

And while Pike was thusly loading him with the hope of eventually pumping him the more dry, did he think of Betty? Yes, he thought of her; he remembered her years of love for him; he called to mind that when his new-found friends were belching venomous scandal at him from every cross fence, Betty was his comforter, his apologist, his true-blue sweetheart; yes, these things came to him, and here is the effect they produced:

"Now, by G—d," he said to Bill Ott, when the pension news came; "now I reckon Bet Doyle'll sing a new tune—

she'll kind o' wish she hadn't been so d—n brash 'bout hidin' that white-livered brother behind her skirts! But she can go to the devil! I'm d—n lucky I give her her walkin' papers—hey, Bill?"

"Why, sure, Andy—does credit to your good sense," and down went another gob.

Of course, Old Man Dodd had the highest attainable notions of what he would have Andy do with the pension—all his plans converging to the title of Andy Dodd, Gent. But a man who could sink to such a stage of moral perversion as to even breathe Betty's pure name before Bill Ott, the apotheosis of contamination, could hardly be expected to realize any status significant of gentility or gentlemanliness, although I am not prepared to deny that he might readily lay claim to designation—Andy Dodd, M. P. (Moral Pervert.) Be that as it may, Andy agreed with the McNeils that "firin' " was beneath him. We know that he had long detested the service of friend Hicks; now he found that he had really detested all "firin' " service. Consequently, he determined to bid adieu to Hicks' service in particular, and all "firin' " service in general, and just how to do it consistent with the dignity of Andy Dodd, Gent, was a matter of no little consideration. He couldn't just quit. That suited laborers well enough, but it wouldn't do at all for gentlemen. So he solved it in your true gentlemanly style: met Hicks in a crowd, and after giving him a genteel cursing out for old time's sake, resigned, and wished the firm of Hicks & Doyle a cold berth here and a hot one hereafter, (though why he should want to be in proximity to his enemies for eternity is beyond me).

The Pecksniffs and the Bumbles roared over Andy's gentleman-like way of "firin' Hicks 'n Doyle," as Wicked

Bill termed it; but when Mat heard of it he stepped over to the deadfall and said to his partner:

"Deacon, I'm sorry I wasn't there yesterday. Bein' as I'm partner, I ought to come in for half the cussin's—Huh!"

The Deacon feigned a most pious "hit-me-on-the-other-cheek" air, and, pointing to his Bible, said:

"Forgive him, he knew not what he did."

"Oh, huh! You know I'll freely forgive him."

"That's right, my son, *per*fectly right. *'If thine enemy smite thee'*—eh?—eh?"

And thereby hangs a tale!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HICKS, PEDRO & CO.

It is not to be supposed that the Deacon forgot or forgave Andy's insult. He deposited it safely in his little cranium and bided his time, letting it draw interest the while. He was not one of those who are quick to resent, nor was he slow to forgive—for he never forgave at all; and, I may add, he never resented unless he could derive a profit thereby: Dud had judged him correctly in that, as, indeed, most every other respect. And, really, Andy should have known his former employer better than to have imagined he could be insulted with impunity; for, though he gave no immediate retaliation, when he *did* strike back, it was like the bite of the East Indian snake Doyle (not *Mat*, but Dr. A. Conan,) tells about—full of venom, but scarce traceable.

Old Man Dodd, in his gentle, mild way, took his son to task about it, and told him that now that he would soon be a business man, he must make friends and not enemies; and he advised him to tender Brother Hicks an humble apology, which Andy scornfully declined to do.

The "due and early course" mentioned in the Pension Office letter having expired, several of our friends began to wonder just when the draft would arrive, and to worry considerably as mail after mail came in, and day after day went out, and brought or took with them no mention of a draft. Now that it was all but over with, the week's

waiting were worse than the previous years', and Andy, who had before cared less than a snap about the pension's being allowed,—now that it *was* allowed, fretted and fumed powerfully at the delay. After having nagged his father nigh crazy, the old man at last sent a respectful query to Washington, and received an answer that as soon as Congress set apart their usual appropriations for such matters, he would receive his draft. So our friends took to watching the papers, and scanning Congressional doings and misdoings, and as Congress put off their appropriations until the closing hours of the sessions, and put off adjourning *sine die*, Andy, not knowing that they had been worrying the people generally by such procrastination for time out of mind, concluded that they were just doing it out of pure, downright meanness, and cursed them accordingly (which, of course, was a novel experience for Congress).

Thus the nine days' wonder wore itself out, and Andy gave up sitting around the post-office watching the mails, and re-entered the spicy atmosphere of Ottism.

One morning, he had gone up-country with Bill and several of the elect to spend the day at Fritz's: Old Man Dodd had just sent the south-bound mail down to the depot, and was sitting in the rear of his meagerly stocked store talking with Deacon Hicks. They were discussing Andy's future, and the best business to launch him into, when the pension came—a subject of interest to both, though, perhaps, from dissimilar motives. The old man was a very slow talker, and the Deacon had been listening to him with exemplary patience, every now and then putting in a timely bit of advice, when the whistle of the morning train from the north caused the postmaster to observe that "it must be 'bout mail time."

The train from the north didn't stop at Pike in those days, but threw the mail off as she passed. She had scarcely cleared the corporation limits before the agent came bustling in and tossed the familiar-looking sacks over the counter. With his accustomed circumspection, the old man emptied them, and began assorting their contents, Deacon Hicks remarking that he'd wait for his mail.

After the letters had been stamped and pigeon-holed, there remained laying on the table a long envelope, addressed to A. B. Dodd, Esq.

A. B. Dodd, Esq., opened it, and presently called to Hicks: "Dee-con, will you please step here?"

"Cer-nly, sir,—cer-nly," and behind the case he went.

"Here it is," said the old man, holding out a slip of paper."

"You mean draft?"

"Yes—the dra-aft."

"*Con*gratulations, sir; con*grat*ulations, dear sir."

"Dee-con, I'd like to go right up to teown 'n get the money, but Andy's done gone 'n I declare, I——"

"Not another word, sir! Lessee, lessee, eight ten—plenty time, plenty time—allow *me* to go."

"Dee-con, that's powerful kind of you to——"

"No more, sir—not kind at all, at all—gives—greatest—pleasure; now just 'dorse it—'dorse it."

"You mean put my name——"

"That's it, sir—right there—little further up—there—good! Now, lessee, eight twelve,—ten minutes yet. I'll step over—Court House."

"Well—Dee-con, 'fore you go, lemme give you a little tin box I got here—it'll be the very thing to put the money in—here it is."

"Beautiful—*beau*-tiful, sir—just it."

"It's a box they sent me from the Depart*ment* when I was first appointed—see, it's got U. S. on it."

"U. S.—the very thing——"

"'N Dee-con, git it all in currency."

"Currency—good, sir,—lessee, eight fifteen,—*good*-bye, sir; be home this evening."

A cordial handshake and the Deacon, the draft and the little box departed. That afternoon, at three thirty to the dot, the Deacon, the little box, and a package of nice, new, crisp greenbacks, walked into the post-office, followed by Whittledom. The news had gone around, and Old Man Dodd had told over and over again just what he had said, and just what the "Dee-con" had said, and all about it—little box, U. S., and all. After the greenbacks were viewed by enraptured Whittledom, Hicks and Old Man Dodd retired to the latter's sleeping room. Closeted together there, Hicks informed his "dear old friend" that he would gladly offer him his safe for temporary use, but it was such an old, easily-gotten-into affair, that he, himself, never kept much cash in it, and since he and Matthew had gone into partnership, he had been more careful than ever, as it was his duty to be on Mat's account.

The Deacon whipped the Devil around a regular California stump in telling this, and it was all wasted, for the old man said, when Hicks had finished: "I'm powerful obliged to you, Dee-con, but I ain't a-skeered to keep it here; I got no enemies, thank the Lord! 'n I don't believe the world's as bad as it's made out to be nohow. I'll jes put it right down in this little trunk, snug as you please; Andy'll be home by supper, 'n it'll give the dear boy a hearty appetite to take a look at his money—'n, Dee-con, Andy may be jes

a leetle wild, 'n hot-headed, but he'll come out strong yet 'n make that money count."

Hicks thought so, too—had thought so all along—and after assisting the old man to put the box away (and noticing the trunk lock was broken), took his leave.

Supper time came, but Andy didn't; night time came, but still no Andy; and after prolonging his bedtime until far past his usual hour, Old Man Dodd retired alone.

There are very few business firms that cannot be found in Bradstreet's, but I am inclined to believe that the firm which was established that night in Pike is one of them—"Hicks, Pedro & Co." The firm was organized shortly after dusk in the Deacon's sanctuary, and after an executive session of an hour's duration, took a recess. Later in the night the firm again held a business meeting, evidently for the purpose of capitalizing stock, for a package of crisp, new greenbacks was much in evidence. When the meeting adjourned, the afore-mentioned package was placed in a neat little tin box bearing the initials U. S., and that was in turn, placed in the Deacon's trunk.

The following morning Andy and the Otts returned from Fritz's, and had hardly entered town before being apprised of the draft's arrival. Andy hurried over home and received in detail from his father the much-rehashed account of what had been said and done on the day before; and then the old man, beaming with anticipations of Andy's delight, took his son back to the trunk, raised the lid, and said:

"Now, Andy, you lift the tray up 'n I'll git it."

Up went the tray, and the old man stooped down, murmuring:

"It's right in this corner, underneath my winter—why, let—me—see—no—maybe I put it in the other corner—

I'll de—clare—maybe it's at the bottom—Andy! *Andy! Andy!* It's gone—my Lord! it's gone!"

Down fell the tray; down knelt Andy—right and left went the contents of the trunk, and finally, young Dodd, perspiring and trembling, gasped:

"Gone, by G—d! You've played h—l, pa!"

Gone it was, and the poor old man sobbed like a child (as, indeed, he was in all but age), and heard not the harsh, wicked, unfilial words of his son. Poor old man—left a widower when Andy was in knee-breeches—concentrating all his hopes on his only child, and now, when needing the affection and strong arm of that child, to have a profane exclamation of selfish chagrin hurled at his gray head. The loss of money! What was it? Something ascertainable and attainable by dollars and cents—by labor, by supply and demand, by skill, by luck, by chance, by theft: a sum—a fortune, if you will—but something that represented to Andy not one tithe of the *princely* fortune he had in an example of integrity, Christianity and humility. The loss of the greenbacks! The repeatedly voluntary rejection of a legacy of rectitude and righteousness! The two won't bear comparison, and contrast but minimizes the one and magnifies the other. Day after day, year after year, Andy had let Sin steal his father's teachings, little thinking that the grave grew ever closer, little supposing that once gone, "The wealth of every treasure store" could not bring back his sire—*and little caring!*

Money—the earning of which Andy held in the skill of his own good right hand; placed higher in his heart than a heritage of honor. Well had the mentor, Bill Ott, taught his pupil! Now, when he could witness grief for him only and not for the money in itself; now, when he could stab that grief with "You've played h—l, pa!" now, I

say, was he truly fit for a diploma signed by depravity's entire faculty.

* * * * * *

Every effort was made, but no trace could be found of the money, or the thief or thieves. It seemed insoluble. The firm of "Hicks, Pedro & Co." were silent partners, as silent as futurity, the Sphinx, and the Seven Sleepers combined and condensed. The night the money was stolen, just as the firm adjourned, and, to all intents and purposes, dissolved, the senior member whispered to the junior member:

"Pedro—must lie low—low, Pedro, *low*. Soon—excitement blows over—authorities quiet down—division—you your share—me, mine, eh, Pedro, eh?"

Pedro "eh'd" and assented, knowing the "sanctuary" would be the last place in the world searched, and the Deacon the last human being suspected.

CHAPTER XIX.

"HELP!"

TIME kept rolling on in Pike pretty much after the same fashion of its rolling in other places—only, maybe, not as varied.

The Dodd robbery was still unravelled, and though Mat had worked tirelessly on the case, it was a case that wouldn't untangle for Mat or anybody else. The Deacon from time to time had essayed to coach his partner, suggesting possible clews that turned out with a monotonous sameness,—to wit, *nil*. As for Old Man Dodd, he remained as dazed as though humanity's perpetual Lawn-Mower had never rolled an inch since the greenbacks disappeared. He saw and noted (and his heart bled thereat), Andy's reckless course, and, simple-minded old fellow that he was, he cherished a mute hope that whoever took the money would also see and note his boy's kennel-ward drift and return the money, thereby damming the drift. But as the good old Christian never gave voice to the hope, the hypothecator of those greenbacks couldn't ever become aware of it,—or the greenbacks would most assuredly have been replaced—with interest. He consulted Brother Hicks about the advisability of posting a notice of his hope in the shape of a reward, but upon the Deacon informing him that that would constitute the fearful crime of compounding a felony, the old man alarmedly abandoned the notion.

So it went—or, more precisely, so it stopped. Panta-

looned Pike's bucolic Pinkertons gave it up, and resumed whittling; Petticoated Pike did likewise, and resumed scandal and kindred neighborly diversions—or, in other words, the particular criminal not being located, they went back to their occupation of manufacturing *bad characters* at second hand.

Mat and the Deacon were the only people in the country who held to it—Mat from a sincerely disinterested desire to recover the money, and Hicks from a sincerely *in*terested desire to keep his partner's mind from (sawmill) business worries.

Andy, when he found Time so unaccommodating about its rolling, and no signs of apprehending the taker or the taken, took the next best thing—a firmer grip on the moral toboggan slide than he had hitherto enjoyed. He wouldn't have gone back to Hicks for any consideration, although Hicks was (good soul!) more than willing to reinstate him, telling Mat that " 'To err was human and' eh? eh? Matthew?" and "Matthew," needless to say, replied, "Huh, 'course, Deacon: Lord *knows* I bear him no malice." But Andy bore enough malice for Mat and him both, and at the bare suggestion of returning to his old duties (with better pay, too, which was Mat's work), sneered:

"*Me* go back to firin' for *that* push, after the way they've acted? Not by a h—l of a d—n sight!"

He did venture up to city and even joined the union, but as his father had to go up a few days later and bail him out of the caliboose, he concluded that Pike and liberty (license) was preferable to the city and calibooses; so he came back to Bill of profane fame, and having several flasks secreted about him, was, if you will believe me, welcomed with salvos of sulphuric salutations.

"Pedro" had essayed to re-enter the gaieties of urban life

several times, but the Deacon gave first one plausible reason for postponing the division of the greenbacks, and then another, until early summer had nigh set in and found our sable friend still waiting, though he was not waiting as still as Hicks could wish. Occasionally he managed to obtain a small advancement on the dividend, but Bill and Andy and Constable Tobe usually had it discounted by midnight, for although the negro was proficient in metropolitan card methods, he found the rural white man's burden a losing game in Pike.

Miss Hennon's second term was drawing to a close. She had grown to be a general favorite, not alone with the young folks, but the old ones as well. When she first came, Pike eyed her somewhat askance. Dud, who had not then lost prestige, had negatively opposed her selection, from a natural and laudable enough point of view; and Pike echoed his sentiments, not because of any sectional prejudice, you understand, but because every town or county likes "home talent" best; and, for my part, if "home talent" isn't supported *at home,* and is even halfway worthy of support, why, the chances are, it will have an uphill fight getting it abroad.

Of course, citizens of the Ott calibre opposed Miss Hennon, just as they would oppose the Saviour Himself, if he had hailed from Yankee-land; but the citizens of the Ott calibre were the very same citizens who bushwhacked and pillaged and fought bluecoats every way except face to face in the sixties; were the very citizens who were negro overseers in the fifties, and negro seducers in the seventies; were the very citizens who cried "Hurrah!" when the South's best friend fell in Ford's Theatre (and when the *real* Confederates were genuinely indignant at the assassination); were the very citizens—but why go on? *That*

calibre may control the miserable, little, *non*-representative, back-water stations along the railroads, but they will never control the sons of Stevens, Davis, Lee, Lamar, Beck and Grady. *That* calibre is a curse, but not a criterion; and so the little teacher taught on, and her well wishers were legion. At the close of the first term she, in conjunction with some mothers and big sisters, had given the scholars a pic-nic; this year it was to be repeated, and from the amount of cakes and pies and things being made at the Doyleses, Mat observed:

"Picnic! I say *pic-nic*—to-morrow the doctor'll say *"Gee whillikens!"*

"Never mind, Laura," laughed Mother Doyle, "he's jes mad 'cause he ain't a-goin'."

"Why!" Mat exclaimed (powerfully innocent), "I hadn't heard I wasn't a-goin'."

"Well, you hear it now," declared the little teacher, shaking a gingerbread horse at him, and continuing, "no men allowed."

"You all goin' down to the valley, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you'll be in a quarter or so of Dud's, 'n I bet he'll come down 'n make you all pay for trespassing. It'd take one o' those cotton baskets o' fixin's to do him."

Mat hoisted one of the baskets up on his right shoulder and started for the wagon, and the schoolmarm said in a stage whisper to Mother Doyle:

"Id better follow him; gracious knows what he'll eat!" Mat (who, of course, didn't hear!) reached his disengaged hand over in the hamper and Laura lit out to overtake and stop him, whereat Mother Doyle seemed mightily tickled.

Betty couldn't go; that is, I say, she couldn't—she *didn't*. She said to Mother Doyle, the evening before:

"Now, ma, don't less have any arguin' about it; I'm young 'n got lots o' picnics ahead, while you haven't. Mat's goin' to cradle those oats to-morrow 'n a cold dinner ain't to be *thought* of for him; it's nothin' but drudge, drudge, drudge with him in that Sheriff's office, 'n now that he's aimin' to take a little breathin' spell cradlin', picnic or no picnic, I'll stay home an' fix him up a good dinner."

Mother Doyle heartily concurred in this; in fact, the only point she had argued had been *her* staying home in place of Betty, and Betty wouldn't have a word of it—not a word. So on the eventful morning (early, too!) Mat helped Mother Doyle in the big four-mule wagon (one of the mill feed wagons, gotten up for the occasion and gotten up regardless, too!), and then he swung the little teacher over the side just as easy as if she was a bag of candy (which Mat thought she was!), and, finally, he tossed youngsters in like so many acorns, and up the county road they all started, "screamin', 'n scramblin'," said Mat to Betty "to beat six bits; huh! huh! huh!" That full-hearted "huh! huh! huh!" was worth even a Dewey day to Betty, and such a dinner Mat sat down to!

Dud knew about the picnic. The valley where it was to be held belonged to the Trenome tract—was a neat, snug, little, straggling vale, not big enough to be called a valley, but the nearest approach to one Pike could boast of. For many years it had been used by picnickers and all sorts of merry-makers. Many the day's frolic Dud had enjoyed in it during his boyhood; and the days he had mused away up and down its fern-dotted course since the night he met Her were not few in number. The first Sunday after he had commenced repairs on the farm he put in meandering among the trees and along the valley brook; and nearly every successive Sunday until the day he withdrew from the

Sheriff's race. Occasionally, since then, once a month, or maybe not so frequent, he had strolled over, but he never lingered. The negro Ed told him at dinner that the picnickers were having "a monstrous fine time down the valley, 'n had sent word up for Mister Dudley to come an' eat a bite with 'em." Dud said maybe he'd ride down later—he wasn't sure—and then he went to talking about cotton and how the "stands" looked, as though he had forgotten the picnic. But after pottering around the house and barn in an undecided way for a couple of hours or more, he saddled up "Betty's pony" and put off slowly down the road. Some six or eight hundred yards from the fence the declivity leading to the vale began, and kept up for quite a distance—a mile, I expect—and nowhere was the bottom of the ravine, through which wound the brook, what you would call out of good hearing distance from the road—though children could easily be lost to view in the undergrowth. The eating ground was near the beginning of the miniature canyon, and when Dud came opposite it he began to hear the laughter and shouts of the young folks. He at first reined up, but seemed to change his mind, and murmured, after a moment's reflection, "Go on, little pony, 't ain't fair to Mat—she's his'n—get up!" Every now and then he saw the flit of childish forms dashing to and fro, but they grew fewer as the little pony trotted on and came towards the lower end of the valley. Once Dud had seen Mother Doyle swarmed over by a crowd of tots, but She had not crossed his vision, which he thought natural enough, for She wasn't "much bigger'n a pa'tridge," and he smiled for memory's sake. He supposed he had about passed the last of the merry-makers, and was saying to the pony, "Trot up, young 'un; we'll make town and back 'fore supper." He raised up in order to seat himself

more firmly, when there came a cry—a woman's voice in fright, in agony, cried "Help!"—and the pony didn't wait to be turned: she wheeled whence the piercing shriek came from the valley, and her rider shouted with the fury of ten thousand demons:

"God Almighty! It's Laura!"

A moment later he was by her side, and groaned in agony as he saw her lying unconscious on the ground, and a ghastly smear of blood on her fair face. Beside her lay a scattered heap of ferns, and he knew she had strayed off from the party gathering them; and, further on, a yard perhaps, was a well-worn, brown derby. Dud thought he recognized it, but he had no time to pause. He placed Laura across his saddle and galloped up the ravine; he saw Mother Doyle and some of the larger children hurrying towards him—they had heard his terrible shout. When he reached them he tenderly lifted the little teacher down, and said in a breath:

"Mother Doyle, here—quick!—one of you boys bring the team—make time!—you know where old man Honeyburr's is, Mother Doyle. It's a half-mile straight across yonder 'n a quarter closer 'n my house; take her right there' n tell old man Honeyburr to come to Pike at once 'n bring his gun—come straight to Mat; thank God we've got a good Sheriff, for we need one this day!"

He turned back down and soon came to where the hat lay, stooping, but not stopping, he picked it up, and saw a name scrawled in rude characters on the sweatband.

"It's him—I knew it—'Pedro!'"

CHAPTER XX.

THE STORM GATHERS.

Dud gained the road, and started at a furious pace for Pike. He seldom, if ever, used a whip or spur to his animals, especially those he had taken young; but now there was no need for either. The little pony caught the fever of his excitement, and bent her every muscle to the task. True, he urged her in no very mild language, and constantly patted her flanks and wethers vigorously; but he would have choked without some outlet to his passion. The veins in his neck stood out until it seemed as if they would burst, and had the pony abated one jot of her speed, he would have jumped frenziedly down and tore on alone. But he was astride as game a piece of horseflesh as Pike boasted—a tight, stocky roan, with the endurance of a broncho, and intelligence for a dozen ordinary plugs. She knew when her master, (though I should be more correct in saying her playfellow), was out for pleasure, and when for business, and that her ride now was on the most pressing business he had ever ridden her to, she realized from the instant they started.

The pebbles and dirt flew in a constant rain from either side as she plowed her way onward—leaping mud holes, taking short cuts at turns, over bushes and between trees, getting wind up one rise for a mad dash down another; performing these and numberless other feats that would have long since thrown an inexperienced rider, the pony and

Dud passed roadside fields with almost engine-like rapidity. The fences on either hand were strung out in the fashion one watches them from a train, and it would seem an impossibility to note individual objects. Yet Dud's eyes were sweeping every field, every opening; he paid no heed to the road, reposing full confidence in his mount, but scrutinized the country-side, and whenever he saw some neighbor he would slacken up and halloo loudly.

It was the time of the year when the farmers were busy with the growing crops, going through the furrows of the corn and cotton, or getting in early oats, and time and again as he neared Pike did Dud rise in his stirrups and call:

"Whoo-hee! Come here, quick!"

The plow or the cradle would stop, and across the land would lope some neighbor who knew Dud never took people from work unnecessarily. Arriving near enough to be hailed understandingly Dud would cry:

"Get your gun, and meet me at the Sheriff's office in town; don't lose a minute—and keep your eye peeled for Pedro, you hear? All right! Tell you all in town—hurry—get up!"

Away would dash the pony, leaving wonderment, almost consternation, behind her. But no one lagged. Men-folks burst breathlessly up to their cottages and shouted:

"Quick, everybody! Get my shotgun, Sally; put some shells in my pocket, Lucy; hurry, all hands—I'm off to the stable—bring the things out there—load the gun—don't ask me no questions, move, I tell ye!"

Then there would be saddling in haste and parting instructions to watch out for Pedro, and keep the guns ready; and before Dud's pony was well out of hearing her tracks were covered by a galloping follower.

On, on, on, tore our friend, sounding the alarm to all he saw; and, at last, when he turned into the long stretch leading past the Doyles' into town, he gave one ringing yell that brought Pike to its feet. Pine sticks were cast aside, knives shut, pipes dropped and Old Man Dodd's porch, Uncle Alec McNeil's gallery, and the depot platform, were alive with eager faces.

"Why, it's Dud," declared one.

"Drinkin'?" surmised another.

"Pshaw! no—Dud ain't touched a drop in ——" put in some one else, interrupted by a fourth, who said: "He's beckoning to us—see, he's stopped at Mother Doyles'—he's dismountin'—he's——"

But just then another yell came pealing down the road, and the now thoroughly alarmed lookers started with one accord—the younger and more impetuous outstripping the older and cooler heads.

Dud, meanwhile, after shouting to the oncoming crowd to wait at the fence, ran around the walk, and, seeing Betty in the kitchen lighting the fire for supper, addressed her as mildly as he could. He knew her quick nature, and feared to shock her by his agitation; but it was a herculean attempt to pretend calmness. His whole being was on fire—one second he cursed himself for not remaining with Miss Laura; another, he cursed himself for not searching immediately for Pedro, and so on; a thousand flames were at his heart; everything he did seemed the very thing he ought not to have done. Reason, or even think, coherently, he couldn't; as well ask a meteor falling from above to select its striking place. He was insane, yet possessed every faculty, and had done nothing amiss. He dared not stop before the kitchen door, for then Betty would see him quiv-

ering and note the streams of perspiration that soaked his clothing, so he called:

"Hello, Bet—where's Mat?" and essayed a smile.

Great God! a smile, he thought, and Miss Laura unconscious, perhaps dead!

"Why, hello Dud! Laws a mercy, you scare me like that agin and I'll—why, what's the matter?"

No use for Dud to have kept moving from side to side, pretending to be looking out in the field for Mat. Betty was too keen not to see that something extraordinary was up. Dud answered:

"Don't ask me, but *where is Mat?*"

"Binding oats down in the new ground—tell me, Dud—" Her curiosity had to wait. Dud was gone—stopping every dozen yards and shouting:

"Whoo-hee, Mat, whoo-hee-e-e! Come to the *house!* whoo-hee-e-e!"

He had covered some hundred or more yards, when he heard the faint sound of an answer and paused to catch the words.

"Whoo-hee!" it came, ever so light, and Dud thought, "Oh, damn it! he's 'way down in the far end."

"Whoo-hee!" it sounded, just a little plainer.

Dud drew in all the air his broad chest could hold, and, making a trumpet of his hands, he replied:

"Come to the house—*h-u-r-r-y!*"

"Comin'," came back the answer, a little plainer still, and Dud murmured, "Thank God! I'll bet those long legs o' his are coverin' ten feet to the jump."

He slowed up somewhat until full out of sight of the road, and then dropped panting on a log. He wanted to tell Mat first—for many reasons. Officially, Mat was the one to know it first, and his position towards Laura gave

him the right; and, too, Dud wanted to appear as cool as possible before the crowd. Every minute he could hear the clatter of hoofs, as somebody he had summoned came in; then he could hear murmuring from the men, and knew they were vainly seeking information of each new-comer.

Betty had run down the back-porch steps when Dud put off in quest of Mat, and, seeing the leaders of the crowd coming pell-mell towards the front gate, and then stop, she ran out to meet them, hastily tying her apron.

"Where's Dud, Betty?" called one.

"What's happened?" another asked.

"Who's shot?" shouted Bill Ott, puffing dreadfully, and the questions came in volleys. When Betty found an opening she replied:

"Gracious, *I* don't know; Dud's gone crazy, I believe. What is the matter—was that him hollered so awful out here? I thought——" she was about to say she thought it was some drunken fellow, but she observed Andy back on the edge of the gathering.

"Yes, that was him," everybody answered, and one cool fellow put the previous question:

"Where is he, Bet?"

"He bounced off after Mat, whoopin' every step of the way. I couldn't get a word out o' him—wonder if his house is a-fire?"

At that instant a rider galloped up from the direction Dud had come, and halted his reeking horse at the crowd. He was immediately assailed with inquiries put in every distracting shape until he finally threw up his hands in despair:

"Stop, for goodness' sake!" he screamed; "air you all gone daft, too; Dud passed my house like a wild man, an' hollered, 'Bring your gun,' an' here it is, an' that's all I

know. He did say somethin' about watchin' out, but none of us could understand him. I watched out, though, all the way in, an' kept my gun cocked, but I ain't seen nothin'."

"Here comes another, an' two more behind him—all armed!" exclaimed Bill Ott, peering up the road:

"D—d if the war ain't broke out agin."

The new arrivals were besieged with questions also, and, in turn, asked what it all meant. One of them said he understood Dud to say, "Look out for Pedro," but he wasn't sure, as he was quite a ways off.

"Pedro!" echoed everybody amazedly.

Then speculation began. Pedro, Pedro, Pedro, was on every lip. What had he done? Whose house had he burnt? Who had he killed? Robbed? In short they went down the calendar of crime and left out the very one. Wicked Bill suggested that maybe Pedro had been caught sober, which was quite as accurate as the other guesses.

Speculation speculated itself clear out of sense and reason, and still no light on the subject. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven farmers rode up, all armed, and all from Dud Trenome's direction. Most of them had heard the warning, "Watch out for Pedro!" but none knew what for, nor had anybody seen the negro.

"Here comes old man Honeyburr," broke off Wicked Bill, who was too far on the outskirts for Betty to hear him, "ridin' like h—l was after him; if *he* don't know what Pedro's done, by G—d, less get drunk an' go to bed. The whole d—d State'll be here presently."

Old man Honeyburr reined up pantingly, and gasped to Betty: "Go, my child, an' fetch me a gourd o' water. Gee whillikens! I'm fagged—hey—uh—hey, uh-hey, uh-hey!" and he and his horse tried valiantly to out-puff each other.

Betty had no sooner got beyond earshot when the old farmer asked in a stage whisper:

"Seen Pedro?"

"No!" replied all.

"He has outraged the school marm!"

* * * * * *

Dud, straining his eyes, at last caught a glimpse of Mat pushing on with long strides up the wood's path, and he arose from the log and advanced quickly: As soon as Mat beheld him, he waved his old battered straw hat, and the two friends increased their gait and were soon grasping each other's hands.

"Trouble, Dud?"

"Yes, that scoundrel Pedro has assaulted Miss Hennon!"

Mat's grip tightened on Dud's hand, and his always pale face became ghastly in its pallor. But still he remained cool.

"Is it so—are you sure. Dud?" he asked, giving him a piercing look with his honest gray eyes.

"Positive—I got there in time to——"

"Save her?"

"Yes."

"Thank heaven! Pedro's at large?"

"Yes."

"Is it out?"

A fierce roar burst on their ears from the direction of the road, the result of old man Honeyburr's news, and Dud pointed mutely whence it came. Mat started forward, almost dragging Dud, and said:

"We must hurry, then—if they catch him he'll be——"

"Lynched!" finished Dud, wrathfully; "lynched, and, by the Eternal, I want to be there——"

"Hush, Dud!"

Mat turned and faced him. There was something sublime in the majesty of his look,—something that stayed Dud's tongue and made him turn his eyes away.

"Dud Trenome, I owe a debt of gratitude to your magnanimity. Is that debt to be wiped out now by your own rash act? Are you, the most generous of men, going to desert your friend?"

"No, Mat, not for a thousand Pedros—but, think, old feller—think! he's assaulted——"

"A virtuous woman—aye, my God! and the woman I worship. If *I* can look unflinchingly on duty with *that* at my heart, surely you can."

"Oh, Mat, Mat," Dud was about to say; "I worship her, too!" but, he thought, "No, no; he must never know." So he stifled a terrible sob in his bosom, and, grasping his friend's hand again, pointed towards the house.

Enough. Mat breathed a prayer of thankfulness to see once more those steel bands of friendship respond nobly to duty's strain, and while they rapidly neared the crowd, he felt that with Dud at his right hand, law and order were firm in the saddle. Alas, he had never encountered the scorching blast of passion's sirocco and little kenned its fury.

As they came in sight of the gate, a shout greeted them, anxious looks were turned their way, and Mat could note at seventy yards the kindling fire that shone from every eye.

"We must be firm," he whispered to Dud.

"Damn firm!" Dud responded between set teeth, and he thought of Mat's words: "If I can face duty with that at

my heart, surely you can," and murmured, "So can they—but they won't."

Betty came running to meet them. She had heard it by now, and, laying her hand on Dud's shoulder, she inquired with blanched face:

"Is she safe?"

"Yes, perfectly safe, don't be alarmed."

"Betty, will you saddle the horses while I see the boys?" asked her brother.

"Both?"

"Yes, somebody may need one."

She flew to the lot, while the two strode on.

"What are the facts, Dud?" began everyone, loudly.

"Talk to 'em, old feller," he said quietly to Mat.

The boys, by this time, were piling into the yard, surrounding the two, and wildly impatient for something definite. Mat began, and that majestic look caused a hush:

"The facts are that Pedro is suspected of an assault on Miss Hennon. I summon each and every one of you to aid me in his apprehension."

A murmur of assent and approval arose, but Mat instantly quelled it and continued:

"And I shall hold each and every one of you responsible for his safe delivery into my charge, should you capture him. All who live near enough get your horses and guns and assemble as quick as possible at the Court House. I have one extra horse for whoever may need him. Lose no time, and——"

He raised his voice, while those who had turned to go for horses and guns, paused:

"I charge you, in the name of the State, to commit no violence."

They dispersed rapidly, silently. Mat directed the farm-

ers who had followed Dud, to rest, and water their horses in the lot and come in. He and Dud entered the house and closeted themselves in the kitchen. When they came forth Dud was more collected than he had been, and both were pictures of determination.

Betty had Mat's Sunday slouch hat brushed and ready in one hand, and several loaded shells in the other.

"I don't guess four are enough, Bet, I didn't bring my gun," Dud remarked.

"Oh! didn't you? Well, I'll get the other and some more shells."

"Dud," said Mat, in a hurried whisper, while Betty was absent, "I noticed Andy on the outside of the fence while I was talkin' to the boys; he's still drinkin', and I want you to keep an eye on him for Betty's sake. He and the Ott outfit will try to do something rash, and you know now, since Andy is mad with me, I'd have a worse effect than ever on him. So, Dud, watch him—don't let him go wrong. I don't reckon anybody can keep 'em from drinkin' that infernal ginger and stuff, but do your best to keep him from harm. I hope he and the Otts won't be the ones to find Pedro,—I saw trouble in their looks. I'll go over to the depot and telegraph a description of Pedro all along the line, and in the meantime, you ride down to the Court House and get everything in shape. Put the boys in squads and get the dare-devil element scattered as much as possible."

Betty returned, and Dud took a shotgun and some shells, and, refreshing himself with a cool drink, left, taking the farmers with him.

They put question after question to him on the way, but he was taciturn. He felt heavy and sore at heart, and torn with the conflict of wrath and duty—duty as Mat saw it,

but to him, he could not help but feel that duty called for swift vengeance. He put the hot thought aside, though, and resolved to see his lifelong friend through, thinking, as he did so, "I'm afraid it will be a hopeless job—the storm gathers, and when it breaks——"

CHAPTER XXI.

JUDGE LYNCH AS A CONDITION.

PEDRO, bareheaded, peeped out from behind the clump of bushes when he saw the coast was clear, and, making his way hurriedly to the road, put his ear to the ground and listened. He heard the rumbling thump of galloping hoofs, and knew that Dud was off towards Pike—on what mission he could easily guess. He remained crouching down, undecided what to do, baffled rage and cowardly fear stamped in every loathesome lineament of his face. Pike was some three miles away by the road; a short cut through the bottom would lessen it to perhaps two and a half. But what was he to do when he got there—if he went? Long before he could make it, not only the village, but all Pike County, would be at his heels, and it would be suicidal to run right where the danger was greatest.

Yet avarice urged him there. The Deacon still had the money—and at the thought of how he had supinely allowed Hicks full handling of the ill-gotten stuff, he poured forth vile maledictions, and beat himself and kicked nearby trees in impotent frenzy—availing nothing, except to tear his already broken pieces of shoes.

Money he needed—money he wanted: wanted it, in truth, far more than he needed it, for he was an adept at stealing victuals and beating trains. Trains: that word brought speculation as to how he would get unseen to the railroad. The nearest point of the tracks was a full five

miles, and, barring Pike, there was no station nearer than six or more miles, and that one was between Pike and the city. He knew the telegraph wires would be kept hot for him: every bad negro he had known (and their names were legion) had invariably pulled for some city when "wanted," and the officers, long ere he reached a getting-on place, would have a description at the station. He considered the feasibility of heading straight for the nearest point of the tracks and boarding a running train; but it was one chance in fifty that he would make a safe catch-on, and if he missed footing—ugh! he shuddered. The brute hated to die, though he entertained not the slightest compunction about killing a helpless, frail woman. However, even if he failed to make a catch-on, but escaped unhurt, he would then have wasted valuable time, every minute of which meant treasures to him—treasures how priceless none but he could appreciate. That terrible cry of Dud's still rang through his foul brain and terrorized him even to the echo. How much worse would be the roar when a hundred enraged men caught him. He put his hands to his face and stopped his ears and cursed horrid blasphemy in very terror.

Through it all, though, avarice kept digging at him and repeating: "Don't leave without your share of Old Man Dodd's money; go, fly and get it. Hicks will protect you. It's the safest plan of all; threaten the white-livered hound with exposure if he doesn't divide up and get you safely away. He'll do it, curse him, he'll do it. Nobody will suspect him of harboring you; go to him before the hypocrite joins in the search."

Pedro possessed sufficient cunning to distinguish the safe and risky sides alike of such a bold move as going to Pike, but the memory of those crisp, new greenbacks was too strong a magnet for him to give due heed to the danger

Then, too, a thought struck him, and he laughed in devilish glee at its contemplation. By the time he should have arrived at the village the men would undoubtedly be gone in search of him; he would go through Hicks' house, find the box, and take all the money; or, if Hicks was there, he'd murder him and take it still. At the possibility of murder the beast arose within him, and the distortion of his vice-marked countenance was demoniacal. Baffled, foiled in his recent hellish attempt, he would make amends by committing one as near to it as possible. He knew what awaited him in any event, if caught, and so, finally, he set out stealthily through the woods for town, muttering:

"Hung for a sheep ez well ez a lamb, an' if I gits clear, Gawd Ämighty! de plunks dis coon'll have!"

No repentance, no remorse was in Pedro's breast. Gods! Prate of penitence finding lodgment in such a sink of foulness! Ye who rant about the tearful supplications, the heart-breaking lamentations of the rapist at bay, watch him slink away from the scene so lately startled by his victim's shriek—remember how he grasped, with ferocious cruelty, that slender form and choked that fair throat,—hear the brutal thud of his filthy fist as it struck her upturned face, call back to mind his worse than devilish grin of triumph before Dud dashed thundering down, and then put the hyena in the whitewashed niche of cant you've set up for such sable martyrs. Come down from the City of Beans and Bosh with your eyeglasses, your petitions, your whereases, your philippics, and your general tomfoolery, and see the arch-fiend of lust before the storm-cloud of vengeance comes to make dastardly fright seem saintly repentance, martyred innocence in your eyes; come down! come down! and if you find one spark of remorse or

regret in his venomed heart for the crime he has plotted, then I'll forswear my people and join the A. P. A.

Pedro's only thought during his cautious approach to Pike, was the money, and, if Hicks was there, the murder. Oh, he would even forego the ecstatic recollection of the schoolmarm's scream, to kill the Deacon. The Deacon had tricked him, had been promising to give him his share, and had lied like a cur; lied to him, who had stolen the money for the Deacon; lied to him, who, by rights, was entitled to more than half—yes, three-fourths; yes—*all* of the spoils. And he'd have them, too! He clenched his great, ugly fists; oh, he'd square accounts with that sore-eyed psalm-singer, and receipt the bill with his rascally blood. He grew wild with exultation at the idea, and pushed on with trebled speed. If he could only make it and finger those crisp, new greenbacks, he'd snap his fingers at Pike, and leave—sorry for one thing only, and that was the failure of his attempt to do worse than murder.

The afternoon was wearing on apace when he caught the first glimpse of the weather-vane on Pike's Court House. Wrapt in designs of murder, he had covered distance so fast that the sudden realization of his proximity to the village made him halt tremblingly and drop to the ground. After the jumping of his heart ceased somewhat, he peered over the weeds and listened intently. Everything was quiet, save now and then the noisy jerk of a cow-bell, or the yelp of some mongrel dog. He had expected to hear some sort of signs of excitement, but the little hamlet appeared to be dozing serenely as was its May-day wont. He scrambled to his feet and crept on. There was a considerable rise just back of town, which the forefathers of Pike had somehow got into their heads was a mountain, and from time immemorial it had been thus

dubbed. Its apex would scarce permit a person to see over an ordinarily tall city building, but still it was high enough to command a fairly good view of the square about the court yard. Pedro considered the advisability of reconnoitering from the "Mountain" (capital M, if you please) before venturing in, but the "Mountain" was a full quarter from him, and as the Deacon's house was on the side of the village nearest to him, it seemed a waste of those treasured minutes to make the detour; added to that, once safely inside the Deacon's and the job done, dusk would soon come to give him cover—a South-bound freight was due to pass just after nightfall, and he could easily make the sprint from Hicks to the tracks and swing on—it always slowed down in passing, as a heavy up grade began there. Those calculations looked promising, so he discarded the "Mountain" plan and advanced straight for the ill-fated Deacon's.

Little he recked what sight would have been unfolded had he looked before he leaped.

He would have seen a gathering of mounted men, armed and silent, he would have seen the square-built form of Dud parceling them into squads: he would have seen little dust clouds along the road, that betokened scouts, and he would have seen a horseman ride out from the depot side, who, did he but know it, would have been his protector, and well-nigh his only protector.

* * * * * * * * *

Hicks mill had closed down when the news of Pedro's crime became general. Hicks would have liked to see the entire State turn out to hunt the negro. He looked on it as the luckiest thing in the world that could have happened, and at a time, too, when he was becoming vastly

worried over Pedro and how to get rid of him. Really it was quite a special dispensation of Providence, to quote from his Sabbath-school talks.

Pedro had been the stumbling block in his way ever since the robbery. He had misjudged Pedro's docility. It had required all his blandishments, and more besides, to keep the darkey quieted and satisfied to wait for a division, and the good Deacon had been in mortal fear day and night, lest Pedro, in some drunken spell, should give the whole thing to the world. Oh, that terrible demon Rum! Why would Pedro drink and jeopardize his own and the Deacon's safety?

Well, indeed, might Hicks rub his hands in the seclusion of his "deadfall" after one of the boys had brought him the welcome information. Well, indeed, might he grin and show his rat-like teeth, or at least what was left of their rotting stumps. Well, indeed, might he pat the iron door of his safe and think of the nice, new, crisp greenbacks therein, and how soon they would all be his—his alone, not one of them Pedro's.

Well, indeed, might he send an order to the foreman to shut down and report all hands to Sheriff Doyle. Bah!—Sheriff Doyle—the name stuck on his meditations like a knot in a pine log. Sheriff Doyle, his partner and his "apt pupil," would exert every effort to find the negro, and *save* him, worse luck. Sheriff Doyle stood for law and order, and the Deacon knew Sheriff Doyle well enough to know that when he stood for a thing, he stood and didn't sit, or lie down, or straddle. None so competent to distinguish real sincerity as the hypocrite. Plague take Sheriff Doyle! If he hadn't been a Deacon he'd have cursed Sheriff Doyle —indeed he would, sir!

Little beady, dirty drops of sweat oozed out of his "strip

o' mouldin'," as he realized what would follow if Pedro was caught and confessed all. In the first fright of thinking it over he took a step towards the safe, half resolved to take those nice, crisp, new greenbacks and what money the firm had, and leave. Second thoughts decided him otherwise.

He heard the yell of the hands when the foreman announced the news. That yell came from stout throats backed by stout hearts and stouter arms. That yell came from boys who had mothers, wives and sisters at home, and who worshipped the virtue of their women as sacredly as your plug-hat gentry. That yell came from boys whose blood by nature flowed hot, and when kindled with the torch of vengeance, boiled worse than the volcanoe's lava. Ah, ha! that yell brought a saintly smile to the holy Deacon as he pictured its meaning—so, he shoved those nice, new, crisp greenbacks in the safe again, and taking his Bible, locked up the "deadfall" and went in quest of Sheriff Doyle. He hoped they would catch Pedro and shoot him down before any tales could be told; but that was a risky hope. Pedro would grasp at any straw for life and try to turn the tide towards the Deacon, so he had to content himself with the next best hope that the negro would escape. Then it was the Deacon saw that this special dispensation of Providence contained a flaw. Why didn't Pedro wait a fortnight, or say, three weeks? By that time Hicks could have gotten as much as it was safe to get out of the mill before the exposure, and have left Pike and Pedro to have it out between them. Too bad, aye, much too bad, quoth he, and prayed they would lynch the rascal for being so hasty with his rapings—it was bound to result in a loss of several hundred dollars to the Deacon, the good Deacon, the devout Deacon. As he came in sight of the crowd he screwed his nutmeg face into as piously horrified an ex-

pression as it is possible to imagine such a face capable of, and forcing his way through the groups, he clutched Mat's hand and shook it spasmodically:

"Shocking, Sheriff, shocking! Never—all my life have—felt so shocked over—thing as—felt over this. Any aid in—power, Sheriff, to help see—law—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Mat, kindly but hastily, "we thank you for sending the mill hands, Deacon, but we must move quick—time has been lost already; Dud," raising his voice, "have you a place in one of the squads for Deacon Hicks?"

"Is he armed?"

"No," piped the Deacon, "I'll run to—house and get—pistol—don't wait—overtake you all."

He made his way through the groups again and pelted up the street towards the parsonage—heartily glad to get away and determined to take plenty of time finding that pistol. He pretended not to hear a lad calling after him, "Hi, Deecon! hi, Deecon Hicks! hi, there; Mister Mat says take his spare horse."

Housewives who saw his ungainly bow legs pattering up the sidewalk, had to hold their sides for laughing, and then wonder how "the Deecon could run with them legs an' not trip himself up."

Arrived at the parsonage, he bolted breathlessly in the door, up the steps, into his room, and landed plump in Pedro's arms.

"*Jee-suss!*" said the Deacon.

Pedro said nothing, but he looked volumes—whole libraries.

"Uh—uh—uh—uh—, howdy, Pe—Pe—Pedro—" began the good man.

"I want that money!" replied the bad man.

"Uh—uh—uh—uh—Pe—Pedro, that money—"

"No palaverin', you lyin' houn'—*git the money!*"

"Pe—Pedro, uh—don't choke—so hard, uh—uh—that money—uh—that money ain't in the house."

"You lie!"

"Indeed, uh—uh—indeed it isn't, Pe—Pedro, lemme show you, Pe—Pedro, leave go—uh—uh—please do, Pe—Pedro, and—show you everything—uh—indeed it isn't here."

"Damn you, you lie! You said you'd keep it heah, an' you've told me since then it's heah."

"Honest, Pe—Pe—Pedro, it *was* here—uh—uh! Don't choke me so hard, Pee—dro! I love you, Pe—Pedro, indeed I do—I'll give you—uh—uh! Great God! Pee—dro! don't—don't, uh-h-h-h!"

Thud, thud, thud, thud rained the blows, and the bloody, soggy mass of flesh dropped in a miserable heap on the floor.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Mat," called Dud, "if you're ready I'll just let the squad I put Hicks in go by the parsonage for him—it's on their way."

"Very well, Dud. Ready, boys?"

"Ready!" they sang out.

"Be off, then, and remember—whoever gets news of him, send word back along the line, and if he's caught no violence."

They separated silently.

The squad to which Hicks had been assigned was off up the street and at the parsonage before the others had got outside of the town limits.

"Hello there, Deacon!" called the leader, "we's a-waitin' on you; come on!—H—l fire, boys, there comes Pedro down the steps—Shoot!"

Bang! bang! bang! blazed half a dozen shotguns, and the loud reports caused all the other squads to stop.

Pedro dashed down the staircase, out the back way, over the fence, and was off like a flash—and so were his pursuers.

Bang! bang! roared the shotguns. Crack! crack! went the Winchesters, and in a minute's time the entire posse were charging through the woods, split in all directions and firing at every jump. One horseman—cool-headed—held his fire, and circled to one side of the fleeing negro, and then closed in in front of him. Another and another saw the move and did likewise, and soon the race had turned back to Pike.

"Don't shoot!" yelled Dud, "you might hit the women!"

First one and then another gun became silent, and when, at last, Pedro flew down the main thoroughfare, the clatter of many hoofs was the only noise he heard.

On—on he tore, and as he neared the tracks he noticed the depot was empty and the freight room door open. He glanced over his shoulder and saw the string of horsemen bearing down upon him, and even as he looked, crack! went a rifle—Andy Dodd, drunk and wild with excitement had disregarded Dud's command. But the shot determined Pedro. He veered his course and sailed on into the freight room, and rolled the heavy door to. He felt around the wall until he touched a shelf, hoping to find a nail, but none was there, and he jumped back just in time to throw his weight against the door.

Outside the din was cyclonic.

Mat's orders and Dud's cautionings were forgotten. Not

merely the dare-devil element, nor the Ott outfit, but ordinarily cool heads were swept along in the whirlwind. Squads were broken, Dud's attempt at a methodical and safe disposition of the force went to naught. Men slid or rolled down from their horses, and crowded, shouting, yelling, around the door; but there was nothing on the outside but a staple catch to pull by, and only one at a time could get a grip on that, so the door remained hard and fast.

"Batter it down!" cried some.

"Let's shoot through it!" yelled others, suiting action to word.

"Burn the d—d depot!" roared the rest.

One after another tugged at the staple-catch. Oaths, shots, and yells rent the air, but the door yielded not.

Suddenly a lull fell on the mass; why, no man knew, unless it was that nature was forced to take a breathing spell. Every breast heaved with panting, and as they looked from one to another, undecided what to do, the ponderous door creaked, rolled slowly back a foot or two, and Mat stood in the opening. At the back of the freight room was a door also—locked—and Mat had overtaken the station master (who had ran out and joined in the chase), and secured the keys from him.

The lull in the storm lasted scarce a second, when he appeared before the crowd, and they drew back at sight of him—amazed—awed.

"Talk to 'em, Mat," quietly said Dud, who was in the freight room with his friend, guarding the rear door.

But Mat stood silent for the present. His hat was gone, his hair disheveled, his face wet with perspiration, his jaws set, his eyes shining with that majestic light of undaunted determination.

In this world of knaves and charlatans what a sight is it to behold a man of duty! And how sublime that sight when we see him firm as Gibraltar before the waves of anarchy! It may be written on the tablets of Eternal Justice that lawlessness must, like the Nile, overflow reason's bank and in the hot tide of passion, commit a crime to kill a criminal.—I say it may be—I am no oracle—but if it is, and the turbid torrent *must* run its course, I thank God that Mat Doyle stopped not his ears to the roaring waters, nor hid his head from the crashing breakers. Aye, aye, I thank God he stood in the gleam and glitter of a hundred gun-barrels and defiled not the badge he wore, but kept his oath.

If we would pay less heed to free silver and free what-not, high tariff and high what-not, anti-expansion and anti-what-not;—if we would get together as a people and not a party, and kick the cussedness out of political platform pirates, and then turn our free and unlimited attention to electing *men of duty*, without waiting for the aid or consent of any set of blockheads on earth, such a character as Mat Doyle, Sheriff of Pike County, State of Judge Lynch, would not stand out as an isolated exotic of an extinct virtue.

Nay, more; if we did this, then those men of duty would see to it that a lynching would no longer be catalogued as an atom under the head of Premature Hemp Parties.

But, alas! alas!—"woe is me" saith some old Biblical fellow, and "me too," saith I; they will declare I cherish not my mother's virtue, because I fain would see my father's soil unsullied by the mob.

At last Mat spoke; clearly, calmly, resolutely.

"Boys, Pedro is handcuffed inside here, and Dud Tre-

nome and I will wait here for the midnight train and take him—"

"Bring him out! Turn him over to us! He shan't be taken away!" broke in the crowd, surging around the Sheriff and growing as wild as before.

"Kill him like a dog! Shoot him! Lynch him!" they chorussed.

Ah, "Lynch him!" The murder was out. "Lynch him!" The tidal wave gave the first real sign of its coming. "Lynch him!" The tiger scenteth the blood and giveth his boding snarl.

But the Sheriff moved never an inch.

"Silence, men!" he thundered. "Back—down with your weapons—if you murder *him,* you must assassinate *me.*"

"Stand aside, Mat," they answered; "we'll have him—stand aside!"

But the Sheriff brought his hand up and covered the mob with his gun.

"I'm done talking—you'll hear from *this* next; disperse! I command you in the name of the State of—"

Crack! rang out a Winchester, and Andy's voice screamed in maniacal frenzy:

"Charge, boys, I've done the work!"

The gun fell from the Sheriff's hands, his jaws relaxed, he stretched out his arms convulsively and tottered. Law—order—life—liberty, all were swirling in the red eddy of riot.

The shackled negro made one mad dash over his protector's prostrate form, just barely eluding Dud, who followed behind.

Then did lawlessness hold high carnival. Then did oaths blacken the God-given air. Then did shrieks blanche

Mercy's face. Then did the brute pay the inevitable penalty, as his riddled carcass swung slowly up, and hung like a pall over reason's Waterloo.

And the man of duty lay stark and cold, a sacrifice to such an orgy.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HARVEST.

"As ye sow, so shall ye reap" is pretty generally held to be a self-evident truth — barring, of course, floods and droughts—and I think the party who originally penned those lines might have added with equal accurateness, "so shall others reap."

If man, as an individual, sows industry, perseverance, sobriety and all the other graduating day, valedictory virtues, his last will and testament, as a matter of fact, will contain substantial reapings for its beneficiaries,—to say nothing of those goods and chattels in the shape of harps and crowns that shall have become eternally vested in the deceased.

On the other hand, if that same man soweth revelry, waste, wantonness, ballet dancers, Manhattan cocktails and race tickets, his last will and testament will resemble a simple calculation in mathematics where you substract two from two—not to mention the exceedingly torrid region that shall have become the deceased's eternal summer resort.

Again, if men in their gregarious capacity, sow liberty, enlightenment, and the pursuit of happiness, the lambs of the flock will be able to sport in serene security.

Whereas, if those same men prefer to sow prodigality and call it economy, bosses and call them public servants, sinecures and call them public trusts, anarchy and call it law,

then the entire flock, lambs and all, will eventually get very sparse cropping, and get it on a tooth and claw basis at that. The condition of affairs in such an event would be, to borrow the unrivalled phraseology of William Ott, Esq., "every son of a gun for hisself and old Horntail astride the hindmost."

From the foregoing, it would appear that there is no cause for alarm, for doth not our bill of rights guarantee us liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and all that kind of thing? Yea, verily—but it guarantees them on condition that we preserve the one, pursue the other, and maintain decent and orderly regard for all those kind of things. If a farmer lays out a rich piece of ground for his sons and plants therein the choicest seeds, and then says: "Now, sons, I've given you a fine lay—take the plow and mules and go up against it," why, so far so good—excellent. But if the boys let the plow rust, never go between the furrows, and spend their time and patrimony playing old Harry and old everybody else, when harvest comes their squandered time will be worth a thousand per cent. on the mill, and their patrimony wouldn't pass currency for a sight draft on a streak of lightning.

Use brightens, non-use corrodes, mis-use injures, abuse destroys. What happens when the three latter are all jumbled together? Chaos. Every little scratch on the shield is just that much abuse. The one scratch is, of itself, insignificant, but it tends to make us careless about the next scratch.

Take a young married couple, for instance. They receive, say, a handsome set of silver articles for the table—pepper and salt boxes, syrup jar, tea-pot, in short, something "bang up." It is so lovely of gran'pa to send them! They are entirely *too* nice to use! They deserve a special

place on the sideboard! They mustn't be touched! But after awhile ma gives the pepper-box to baby to keep him quiet—pa does likewise with the syrup jar, and finally when gran'pa drives over of a Sunday, there is hurrying and scurrying to hide those old battered, mashed, broken, useless presents, so as not to hurt gran'pa's feelings. Fine respect for granpa's feelings at that late stage of the game! But how is it about Gran'pa Republic? Away back yonder, Brother Jonathan and Columbia plighted their troth, and Liberty sealed the vow. The wedding day came 'round, and amongst all the presents, lo! there was a priceless Parchment—the gift of Gran'pa Republic. Now Gran'pa Republic had feelings and common sense with them, too, and he didn't believe in being silent about his feelings until Jonathan and Columbia should have given some bad baby that Parchment to keep him quiet, and that bad baby should have torn it up, just like bad babies always do.

So, while they stood at the chancel rail, with handsome Washington as best man, and all the other fine lads, who had helped them through the stormy courtship, surrounding them, Gran'pa Republic kissed the bonny bride and patted Brother Jonathan's stalwart form, and said:

"My children, the pessimist saith that marriage is a failure, but ye have this day given the lie to such growling stuff. Ye have formed a Union of Liberty before Destiny's altar, and ye shall sweep proudly 'down the long drawn aisle' of Time, a lesson to the old folks, a lesson to your brothers and sisters, and a lesson to nations yet to be; ye shall increase even as the sands of the seashore, and the oppressed and scourged shall flee to you; ye shall go on and on with the rays from Destiny's altar ever lighting your path, and ye shall lay your heads at last in Eternity's lap,

not as a Nation that perished, but as one that was translated. Ye shall do these things, my children, *if* (and Gran'pa Republic laid mighty stress on that *if*, while the handsome best man said *'Amen,'* and the gallant boys of '76 clasped hands) *if*, firstly, ye pursue your way as *one*. Hearken never to hate, for hate will tear you apart, and heed never the wheedlings of other people who envy your marital bliss. Preserve the Union ye have this day covenanted and the bed-rock is firmly laid for the Parchment I now present you."

Lo! he held a scroll in his hands and thereon was written "CONSTITUTION," and a great light shone about it, and high above Destiny's altar there appeared an emblem of floating folds with the white between the red, and thirteen stars blazing and beaming in an azure sky, and down from the dome came the peal of an organ and the chant of an angel choir, and the gallant boys of '76, and the handsome best man, and Brother Jonathan, and Columbia, and Gran'pa Republic swelled the grand anthem of "Sweet Land of Liberty;" and when the last note died on echo's breast, Gran'pa Republic handed the Parchment to Brother Jonathan, and continued:

"Take it, my children, and listen, for I come to my secondly and lastly.

"I said all those blessings would come to pass if, firstly, you maintained this Union, and I now add, secondly, if you keep inviolate this Parchment. Reverence it, not as something to be set up on a golden salver and never used, but as your guide, your rudder, your chart; and so reverencing it, defend its every line against all the world, and use it equitably amongst your children. Teach them its true meaning, the blessings it carries for its preservation, the misery for its destruction. Teach them that one part is as

sacred as another, and that it is all for all. Teach them that it guarantees life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to all and not ninety-nine, ninety-nine hundredths of all. Teach them that it rewards merit, and chastises the offender, and teach them that all offenses must and shall be punished by the law and the law alone. For, even as crime begets lawlessness, so doth lawlessness beget crime, and therefore, I beseech ye, prevent crime by virtue and lawlessness by justice. Take it, my children, and may the God of the Universe bless ye and yours so long as ye and yours keep holy this Parchment."

Then the happy bride and groom turned and went forth into the daylight, and the gallant boys of '76 carried the handsome best man out on their shoulders, and there was great rejoicing and exceedingly much applejack, so much that the big old bell in the steeple cracked his sides for laughing and crying, and Gran'pa Republic admitted for once in his life, that he hadn't seen any such times as those when *he* was a boy. Those were great times, but, ah, me, are they on the wane or not? Sometimes I think they are not; sometimes I could swear they are.

When I hear a newly inaugurated President spout torrents of pyrotechnical poppycock about what a great people we are and how well we are doing (because we elected him), I think, "Oh, pshaw! nothing's wrong—I'm just a calamity howler, that's all."

But again, when I see an absolutely true and admitted account of a coroner's jury on the case of a lynched "suspect," reading this wise: "We, etc., find that deceased came to his death by venturing too far out on the limb of a tree and falling off, thereby breaking his neck," I could almost swear I heard Gran'pa Republic saying, "Take 'em, Chaos, and go to the Devil with 'em." Great Heaven! Talk

about civilizing the Filipinos! We'd better unsavage the civilized first.

That's right; turn over the pages and see if you ain't 'most through this blamed book. Say I'm not only a pessimist and a full-fledged fool, but a negro lover in the bargain. Say I'm some old, disappointed office-seeker taking a cowardly way of unloading my spleen; and you'll be dead wrong, Brother Bigot, of "South Carolina, sah!" and Sister Intolerance, of "Bawsteown, Massachusetts, sir-r! Neow England, sir-r!"

I am not old, nor am I an office-seeker, disappointed or otherwise; never ran but for one in my life and got that.

Does it perforce take pessimists and old folks, whom hope has left nothing to garner, to read the signs of the times? Nay, nay, Brother Bigot and Sister Intolerance. Nay, nay, my sweet-scented pair! Take the Constitution of the United States and the current issue of any reliable journal (thank God, we have a few), for any year in the past decade, read them both, clip the lynching items, not for rape alone, but for everything from that to "mistaken identity," and then, if you can say that even ninety-nine, ninety-nine hundredths of our executions have been legal, I'll found an imbecile asylum and be the first patient, and move to elect you Dean.

Don't recriminate, Brother Bigot, and say, "Well, by thunder! the Yankee did wrong in giving the negro equal suffrage right at the start." He knows he did wrong, and if he's an honest Yankee, he'll admit it and rectify it; but he won't if you recriminate. He'll throw up the job and, what's worse still, turn it over to Sister Intolerance. Then Daddy Horntail *will* be to pay. The Washington Post once said, "Recrimination is confession by retort," and of all the good things in which the editorials of that paper

abounded, that was the best. If you go to recriminating, why you lay the foundation for a civil war besides which the series of events between Bull Run and Appomattox will seem as a chess tournament.

And you, Sister Intolerance, don't imagine that, because you look at the negro through the wrong end of a telescope, you are entitled to a diploma in ethnology.

Astronomists have been wearing their patient eyes out through the right end of telescopes for centuries, and can't tell yet whether Mars is inhabited, much less how to handle the Mar-ites, or let them handle themselves. The trouble with you, Sister Intolerance, is that you quit reading history in 1859; that your controversial library consists of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Whittier's Poems and Ida Wells' Rot; that you don't know the moon has two sides; that you coddle and fondle a few negro runaway scapegoats, and insult their race by calling them its representatives; and, finally, that you go at us Southern fellows in the very way calculated to make us go at you.

I don't pretend to tell you how to adjust your labor troubles—I have my own opinion about those labor troubles, but, until I'm asked, I'll keep it. Much less do I take the word of any hobo mechanic or rank partisan sheet, that every capitalist in the North is a blankety! blank! blank! blank!!

But I do lay claim to something more than a kinetoscope acquaintance with the negro and what you are pleased to call his problem, *i. e.,* his best way of putting himself on an equality with us Southern folks.

Now let me tell you, Sister Intolerance, in all sincerity and friendliness—Lord knows I don't envy you your wealth, albeit you did ours in '59—let me tell you in all seriousness, that when you get ready to meet us half way on the

field of generosity—I don't mean *money* generosity, for we are all poor in a heap down here and glad of it, but *true* generosity, we'll meet you there with hallelujahs, and both of us will mighty soon discover that we've been fooling with this so-called problem exactly like the young housewife who makes a cake and after waiting all day for the cussed thing to get done, remembers she's left out the flour. Yes, meet us there, Sister Intolerance, and we'll both of us go to the common-sense barrel and make another cake, and make it right. If we don't the one that's burning in the stove will raise such a smell after a bit, that Omnipotence will prosecute us for stenching space. Yes, meet us there, Sister Intolerance, not as Greek meets Greek, for you know when they meet, somebody gets pulled over, or the rope breaks—and the negro in this tussle is playing the by no means unimportant role of the rope; but meet us there and admit that when you made the Fourteenth Amendment you tried to change a law of nature with a misapplied principle of Euclid, to wit: things equal to the same things are equal to each other—the negro is equal to three meals a day, a white man is equal to three meals a day—ergo, a negro is equal to a white man. Admit it, Sister Intolerance, and we'll admit, that in sheer desperation of ever mending matters, we have misapplied another great principle of Euclid, to wit: a straight line is the shortest distance between two points; the distance between the limb of a tree and a negro criminal's neck is a straight line; *ergo,* it's the shortest distance.

When those admissions are made, we'll go back and work old Euclid out right, if we miss our supper doing it—as my teacher was wont to remark.

I don't wish to commence tossing bouquets at us Southern folks, because I realize that there is no praise so insin-

cere and disgusting as self-praise, but—honest injun—when you trot out generosity, we are ready to mount; when you trot out intolerance, we'll balk at the post. We mount the former, logic or no logic; we balk on the latter in the face of the Ten Commandments.

Let me give you an illustration of that trait in our character, Sister Intolerance, and bear in mind it's better than a fable, in that it's *true*. In the early fall of '98 the outlook for peace between Spain and the United States was so promising that President McKinley decided to muster out half of the Volunteers. The Regiment of which I had the honor to be a humble member, was included in the order, and we boys were so proud of the President's generosity that we said, then and there, he could have our votes in 1900. Yet, if the Republican party would come in our State during a political canvass and say to the negro, as they have been saying in terms for the last forty years: "We pledge you poor, down-trodden, virtuous, highly civilized colored gentlemen to make it hot for these bull-whip slave-beating lynchers," we would take pleasure in rolling up our usual hundred thousand majority for the other fellow, regardless of what derned nonsense *he* proposed to do.

No, no, Sister Intolerance, don't sit up there in Fanueil Hall and try to solve a problem that exists only in the distorted reflection of your imagination.

A finger pressing an electric button may start some important event a globe away, because there is a logical wire between the button and the event; but you can't do it, Sister Intolerance, you can't do it. You can't press the button of denunciation and expect to start anything in the South but contempt—and more lynchings. If contempt

were all, the harm would not be so great from a purely practical standpoint, but the *more lynchings* is the knot.

All that the bad negro gathers from your denunciations is, a barbecue time when he can cultivate one long, continued crop of vice under your protection. All the good negro gathers from it—well, the good negro doesn't gather anything from it. He's too busy tending that cotton, digging those potatoes, and fattening those hogs, to know that such a place as Fanueil Hall exists. He knows that "the Squire is gwine to give them niggers the biggest kind ob a break-down, with plenty o' cider an' truck, in the ole barn at huskin' time," and, Lord bless your soul, Sister Intolerance, he wouldn't forego that dance for Fanueil Hall or Heaven, with all due respect for both places. No, no, Sister Intolerance, force of arms may whip the South, but it will never conquer her; generosity, love, fair play, forbearance and a hearty hand shake will do that.

So, Brother Bigot and Sister Intolerance, if you can't get it into your heads to meet on that basis, clear the deck. Honest Yankee and Squire Dixie will take a hand—for those two old fellows ain't going to have Gran'pa Republic walk in some day and ask: "What have ye done with that Parchment?" They want him to see on every hand a bountiful harvest of law, order, suffrage for the intelligent, education for the ignorant, reward for the virtuous, legal punishment for the wicked, and Liberty's seal unbroken.

Then questions will be out of order, and congratulations will be next on the calendar.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COST.

I HAVE whiled away a whole chapter on theory; let us go back to our story and count up the real cost of Pedro's sudden taking off; let us sum up the items, divide the total by reason, common sense, practicability, or whatever you choose to call it, and see if the quotient gives us our money's worth.

When the wagon carrying Laura arrived at the Honeyburr's, old man Honeyburr, without waiting for particulars, saddled and armed, and put into immediate execution Dud's summons to Pike, with a piece of news that was erroneous because it never happened. Yet—for old man Honeyburr would have deplored an outrage sincerely and vehemently—he could not withstand the opportunity for what the baseballists call a grand-stand play.

Meanwhile, Mother Doyle, aided by the Honeyburr household, did all in her power to comfort Laura and bring her mind safely out from the awful strain it had undergone.

The result was eminently successful, for Laura's mind was none of your mewling, weeping, hysterical, hurt-before-you're-hit creations, and the actual shock over, and her friends surrounding her, she soon was the self-possessed, unassuming, brave little woman she had always been. Grasping the first opportunity, she told Mother Doyle that she thought it would be better for them to go home—

that there was no occasion for further taxing the Honeyburr's hospitality—that Betty would undoubtedly hear all sorts of reports, and would be correspondingly alarmed, and that, in a word, home would be secure against sensation seekers, and home was where she wanted to go. So home they went. Mother Doyle, we know, was of that firm, self-reliant nature that she would have broached it first, but for respect for the Honeyburrs; she wouldn't, for the world, have them think that their many attentions were inadequate, but she knew that once home with dear, sympathetic Betty and her Matthew—her stronghold in any emergency—she and Laura both would be, if not actually better off, easier in mind. So home they went.

The picnickers had preceded them some hours since, and, indeed, when they at last came in sight of the house, the sun had entirely disappeared.

As they made the last quarter of a mile leading past the front gate, a single rifle shot rang out on the still atmosphere and startled them; it was followed presently by a volley of shooting and yelling from the direction of the depot, and above it all, Mother Doyle thought she could hear Dud's powerful voice crying, "Stop! Stop! Stop!" But she wasn't sure—the uproar was so terrific during its short duration, and she was so alarmed, that it may have been mere fancy. She mentioned it to Laura.

"Did you recognize Dudley's voice, Laura?"

"Why, it seems to me I heard Mr. Trenome, but the noise was so great."

The youthful Honeyburr, who was driving them in, had been alternately gasping *"Geemenee!"* and craning his neck with all possible, and seemingly impossible, elasticity, and he now put in:

"I ain't sure, Mother Doyle, but I believe they've hung

somebody—there's a man or something danglin' from a telegraph pole in front o' the depot."

The two women shuddered.

Somebody hung? Pedro surely hadn't ventured back to Pike. And Dud's voice? What did that "Stop! Stop! Stop!" mean, for the more she pondered it the firmer she became convinced that it was his voice. Mother Doyle was strongly tempted to tell young Honeyburr to drive on and not stop short of the depot, but prudence suggested otherwise, and besides, she murmured with relief, while her alarm abated:

"Mat's there, surely, and he'll render a good account."

A mother's trust in her boy. How often is that trust bruised and disappointed. How often does a mother's heart flutter in despair as she fears to hear the news from her boy—loving him yet better than all the world, but knowing that again and still again, he will drag that heavenly love through the thorns and briars. Mother Doyle, thou art thrice blessed in a son who loves *your* love, because he respects and lives up to your ideal. Death has no sting for such—for thou knowest the grim Monarch cans't never claim your boy in an evil hour; he knows no evil hours. The ringing notes of duty ever chiming in harmony with the chords of filial love, are ever too clear and dear on his ears for the siren's song to find response. Well may you murmur your faith in his account, Mother Doyle, for unless the chalice now coming to your lips, hath the pearl of duty done shining in the bottom, bitter, oh, galling, will be its dregs.

They drew up at the gate, and Betty, who had come out on the porch at the first shot, came hurriedly down to meet them, happy beyond expression to see Laura safe and well.

While they were alighting, Mother Doyle observed a horseman ride out from the depot's direction and head towards them, and she saw presently a little knot of men on foot, huddled together, following him. Things appeared so indistinct in the gathering twilight, that she did not try to recognize the party, until the Honeyburr boy said, more to himself than aloud:

"It's Mister Dud."

"Huh!" exclaimed Mother Doyle, a vague tremor passing over her. "Mister Dudley? Are—you sure?"

She didn't know why she asked the question, but that vague tremor grew and grew, until she advanced to the team's heads, and watched the oncoming group as well as she could in the dusk. Dud, for it was he, was some sixty yards ahead of the rest, and when he made out the Honeyburr team, and Mother Doyle and all, he quickened his pace until he was within speaking distance. He had no idea what he was going to say, and coming so suddenly upon Mother Doyle and Laura, whom he thought still at Honeyburr's, he was full at sea. But he managed to call out in some faint degree of coolness:

"Mother Doyle, we didn't expect you or Miss Hennon, or we'd have—"

"We were anxious to come, Dudley," she interrupted, and then going quickly to his side, she asked:

"Where is Matthew?"

Dud was no actor, and even if he had been, what would it have availed? The most consummate art can conceal nothing from a mother like the news he brought.

She knew now what that little knot of men huddled so closely together meant, and she ran to meet them, brushed them aside, and fell sobbing on her son's silent breast.

"Oh! Dudley!" she cried, "why did you let them kill him?"

A wild, frenzied shriek arose on the night air at the sound of "Kill him."

"Kill him? Is he dead? Is he dead? Is he dead?" screamed Mat's only sister, the sister who idolized him, who had scorned the man she loved for insulting him, who knew not what happiness meant unless Mat was happy, too. She did not love him more than did Mother Doyle, but she lacked that tried and tempered fortitude to sustain the blow. No, she could not bear up.

"Dead! Dead! Dead!" she still wailed, and coming to the still clay that had so lately been her noble brother, she swayed and fell across his form.

Let us drop the dark curtain, dear reader. There is misery enough in life without my drawing it out here—there are tears enough, yes, more than enough—if tears were legal tender we'd all be rich and disown poverty. Let our stricken friends take their sacred dead and their sadly afflicted living into the humble house. Let them be alone with their God in the hour when no human counsel sustaineth. Let them bow before Sorrow's crown—we could not wear it for them if we would, and in our vain efforts to lighten it would only press down the thorns more sharply. Let the dead alone with the living who, in life, alone loved the dead. The sun has not set forever on their hopes, ah, no, far, far from it. *We* could not call now the sunken rays back again to life to light the closed eyes, but *He* will in His own wise time, bid the orb of morn rise and flood the stricken and the sorrowed in a sun-burst of Immortality.

Leave them alone, and to-night when they look out at the canopy of brilliants, and see through their tears a new

star, they will know that the angels have placed Duty's royal crown on the brow of him they mourn.

* * * * * * *

The next day when Dud was starting home to dress for the funeral, Laura overtook him on the gallery and said softly:

"Mr. Trenome, Mother Doyle has asked me to tell you how sorry she is for saying that last night."

"Saying what?" asked Dud, surprisedly.

"'Why did you let them kill him.' The men have told us all—how nobly you stood by him, and how, if they had all done their duty like you, that poor Mat would be alive."

Dud endeavored to stop her by a gesture of deprecation—he couldn't say anything—but she laid her hand gently on his arm and continued:

"No, no, Mr. Trenome; none know better than I what a friend Mat had in you—believe me, his death cannot be a greater loss to you, than yours would have been to him. I know that in upholding him to the last yesterday, you had to stifle the biddings of your convictions, and therefore, you have made the noblest sacrifice a man can make.

"Oh, Mr. Trenome, I envy Mother Doyle and poor, sweet Betty in having such a friend as you. Howsoever heavy may be their grief—and I know it is heavy, for I, too, loved Mat like a brother—but heavy though their's be, the knowledge of *your* friendship will soften their sorrow and lighten their burden greater than all else combined. Did every man make true generosity his beacon, as you have done, the watch fires would illuminate the heavens."

She could say no more—her fingers slipped from Dud's arm, and she buried her face in sobs and turned to go.

Dud held out his hand and tried to give voice to what was welling in his heart, but his tongue could utter no sound, and so he took her hand in his, raised it tenderly, gallantly to his lips, and left: and Laura knew by that token, that she shared, with Mother Doyle and Betty, the rare and priceless gem.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ROMAN FATHER.

THEY say an author has not fulfilled his full duty to the reader until he has disposed of all his characters—gotten rid of them somehow, even if he has to chop their heads off.

But what if his characters ain't his characters? What if they are "free, white, and twenty-one," as the saying goes? Eh? Then, I trow, they will have to dispose of themselves.

If Deacon Hicks, "Dear" Uncle Alec McNeil, and the only Bill Ott belonged to me, I'd put the Deacon, say, at the head of the cash department of a Foreign Missionary Society. I'd put "Dear," say, at the head of those forty negroes her pa used to own (?) and let her talk them to death. I'd put Uncle Alec McNeil, say, at the head of a patent chill cure concern, where he could cure those shakers going and coming, and I'd put the indomitable Bill Ott at the head of a barrel of whisky, a barrel of water, and a tin cup, and let every day be Sunday for Bill (on second thoughts I'd leave out the barrel of water).

Having done that, I believe both the reader and myself could rest contented.

But, ah, me! there is precious little contentment here below, I'm told by people who pretend to have a corner on that article and are bulling the market. Yes, precious little, and, so four of the best and biggest folks that Pike

ever afforded at any one given time, must get rid of themselves to their own satisfaction, if not to ours.

They found Deacon Hicks in his room at the parsonage, right where Pedro had deposited him. He hadn't budged a hair's breadth in sixteen hours, and hence they felt justified in concluding that he was dead. Bill Ott gave it as his unbiased opinion, that it would require more than "one nigger to kill the owner and proprietor of such a vig'rous breath as the Deacon's." Then they examined him again —while the undertaker grew pale with apprehension—and, sure enough, he was alive. Meanwhile they had found some astounding surprises in the Deacon's sanctuary. First, his trunk, bureau, and all had evidently been rifled by Pedro, before that gentleman was rifled, and they found amongst other things not considered indispensable to a Deacon's paraphernalia, an empty tin box bearing the talismanic hieroglyphics "U. S.," which hieroglyphics have a peculiar tendency to rise up and stare a fellow in the face just when he would rather not see them. They frequently perform this aeronautical feat on forged pension papers, broken mail locks, decoy letters, and a variety of other tangible evidences, but wherever and however done, it ends in a contract, the terms of which are, that the party stared in the face will agree to remain in some definite place for some definite time, on condition that "U. S." will quit staring. The Deacon made a mighty pother about it—that is, as much of a pother as a man *can* make with his teeth all knocked out, but the twelve witnesses who had assembled on the Deacon's convalescence, to arbitrate the contract above mentioned and fix terms (see supra), decided that about ten years in Sing Sing was not any too exorbitant a price for the good man to pay.

He is now paying it on the installment plan, and the war-

den tells me is very docile, and meek, and lowly, as all truly good men should be—and doubtless are!

"Dear"—well, I can't speak of "Dear" without joining Uncle Alec McNeil's name, for that worthy pair were never made to be separated in name or in deed.—"Dear" and Uncle Alec McNeil did finally catch a fish up at the city, and they took the sum realized from the sale of the "Cheapest credit store Pike had ever known" (which were "Dear's" words to the fish) and established them a—uh—refreshment parlor; but as the City went dry the next election, the twain were reduced to the pleasant task of imbibing their stock in trade before it "spiled." So I imagine "Dear" has a continual mental retrospect of eighty instead of forty negro slaves, and Uncle Alec McNeil is having a pretty "shakering" time of it.

Wicked Bill Ott, alone of the four, sticks to the home of his ancestors. The last time I saw William, he was undecided whether to join the church or move to Kentucky. He said:

"They ought to dig a di'ch aroun' that cussed City an' sink it—the idea of it's goin' dry! H—l fire, nobody but the Baptists air got any licker these days, an' I reckon I'll have to jine 'em." But there's hope for Bill yet. The prospect of that initial ducking necessary to espouse the faith will hold him off, I suspect, until the City goes wet again.

Those nice, crisp, new greenbacks were found reposing quietly in the Hicks safe, and the sawmill's creditors, who had, of course, waltzed in at the first thunder clap, swore and be dog-goned they would have them on their accounts; but a special commission had come down from the Governor appointing Dudley Trenome, Sheriff, *pro tem.*, and the Sheriff, *pro tem.*, swore and be ding-danged if they

would have them. His Honor, who had presided at the little seance of Deacon Hicks' U. S. contract, decided that from the evidence, those nice, crisp, new greenbacks were the identical ones that had been so kindly brought from the City by Deacon Hicks to Old Man Dodd, and that, inasmuch as there was no evidence of Old Man Dodd's ever having given, granted, conveyed, or bequeathed them, the ownership still rested in him. Thank an ever just Providence, that a just pension, at last and for once, found a just owner, and that Old Man Dodd's pension money cannot be included in the costs of Pedro's lynching; and I wish I could say that Old Man Dodd himself was left as free from its baleful effects.

If only the guilty themselves suffered for their misdeeds, equity would be undisturbed, but when the innocent are put on the rack, equity revolts.

If Law says to A: "See here, I've stood your capers just as long as I'm going to stand 'em. You've been my enemy ever since you were able to shuffle a deck of cards. You've done nothing but mock and scorn me in all your actions. You've been a standing rebuke to me who hast protected you. You've stifled every good impulse to make room for evil, and you've, at last, made your presence at large an insufferable menace to me and mine. I shall not have the rest of the alphabet suffer because of your sins, and, therefore, I'll put you in gaol, where you can take your cussedness out on the rock pile when you feel it bubbling over."

Such a discourse from Law to A. is appropriate, and if acted upon, will be beneficial to the rest of the alphabet.

But if A. says, in substance: "Fire away, Law; I never respected you and ain't a-goin' to begin at this late date. Fire away—you can't harm me, anyhow. I'm so far steeped in gall, that sugar is my antipodes. Fire away,

you can't hurt me, old Law, and you'll only break B.'s heart."

What have we got to say then? Why, that it is rough on B.

Then Law replies to A., and says:

"But B. has always been my friend, he has obeyed my precepts, and held himself upright before all men. Wherefore should I reverse scripture and visit upon the father the sins of the son?"

To which A. gives bitter response:

"Because you let loose upon me, when I was a fledgling, pernicious teachers, who told me that manliness laid in drunkenness, and taught me that only milk-sops respected you."

And Law bowed down his head and wept to think that those weeds of the Ott outfit, whom he could have choked, or at least, scattered, had grown up in a body and blighted the pure growth; wept to think that they went unscatched, while misguided A. and unoffending B. went through the fire; wept to think that the rest of the alphabet would wait until the Ott outfit should have committed a prescribed felony before putting them where their example could affect naught but four walls—as if it wasn't as much of a felony to kill a pure young soul as its body. But there was nothing for it now; the ounce of prevention had been neglected, and only a very big pound of cure could now answer, and as that pound never went near the Ott outfit, it was no cure at all. The Ott outfit still flourishes and thrives on every crumbling bit of decay that is constantly dropping, fungus-like, from Law.

After Pantalooned Pike had safely and permanently relieved itself of Pedro's presence, it found out a number of interesting facts that would have been not entirely devoid

of good results had they been looked into before the lynching.

First, and perhaps most important, they learned that Pedro hadn't been exactly guilty of the capital offense. When old man Honeyburr dashed up with his firebrand, and was almost immediately succeeded by Mat and Dud, who endeavored—honestly—to throw water on the firebrand, Pantalooned Pike wouldn't have it that way. Knowing Mat's anti-lynching sentiments, and seeing Dud quiet and laboring under heavy feelings, they made no doubt but that Pedro was guilty of the worst, and, on that ground, let the merits of the case go unexamined until it had become a matter of no moment to Pedro whether the affair was settled on the evidence or not.

Not so with press and people. Press and people heralded the lynching abroad in the land, and out of the chaff of sensation was picked the truth of the thing, and out of the chaff of intolerance and bigotry was picked an honest reckoning.

"Southern outrages" had its day, of course, and Northern cussedness received retaliation in kind, but after intolerance and bigotry had vented and vaunted themselves hoarse, sense began to solve what nonsense had hopelessly tangled.

Then it was that Pantalooned Pike made discovery number two. They found out to their great surprise, that Mat had never requested any favor of them at all—that he had simply required them to do their duty, and that if it hadn't been for Andy Dodd, they would have, beyond peradventure of a doubt, done their duty. They weren't at all clear as to when they would have begun, but they were positive, mighty positive, that they had been just crazy to stand by

poor Mat and uphold the law, and do their duty, and that Andy Dodd frustrated the noble design.

So, quite naturally, such reflections led the way to discovery number three, which was no less than Andy's arrest for murder; and there is no question whatever but that, in the pious revulsion of feeling that had overtaken Pantalooned Pike, Andy would have punctuated some tree limb as had Pedro, had not the Sheriff *pro tem.* hustled him to the City. When bigotry does get good, why it will do anything, from holding inquisitions to burning witches.

Andy, under the careful professional tutelage of the Ott outfit, had for years been endeavoring by a systematic course of vice, to break his father's heart, and this last blow well-nigh bowed the old man's head forever. He was of that rugged old pioneer type who can stand the battering of adversity, charge after charge, but who, when they do succumb, are past revival. For years his only sustaining hope had been to see Andy started on his own hook, independent, sober and industrious. He had hammered at the pension with bull-dog tenacity for that purpose, and that alone, but now it all went to ashes. At last he had the pension money, after having despaired of its recovery—but where was Andy? In a place where no person with Old Man Dodd's blood in his veins had ever been before, and in there, too, for a dastardly crime—one that made his Christian father's blood stand still and almost congeal.

This was the reward of virtue. This was the harvest of a life of uprightness and integrity. This was the end of his hopes and plans for Andy. It was hard, hard, hard.

He could have been excused for closing that Book which had always been his Rock of Ages, and crying out in very bitterness of soul: "Away, lies—all lies!" But far from it. Wounded and tottering, with the light of life growing dim

and slowly giving place to the light of another and a deathless life, the old man turned the sacred chapters over until he came again for the thousandth time to the patient man's woes, and spelling out with trembling lips the grand lesson of fortitude, he knelt by his now deserted and smitten cot, and said with the patriarch: "Blessed be the name of the Lord. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty. He is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered? If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: for I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

Such was the old man's faith. A simple faith, say our master minds—our Huxleys, Tindalls, and Greggs—but an honest one, they must admit, and in the very simplicity of its honesty, a sublime faith. With his head upon the open page of the Book, he received the stroke, nor complained nor questioned. Golconda's mines for such a faith! I often see the painted dame and the broad-clothed sire incline their well-groomed heads, while some powdered purveyor of fashionable religion tosses bouquets down the velvet aisles, and congratulates God on having such a *bong tong* congregation, and then mine eyes beg memory to take me back to the little bare room made desolate by sorrow, and learn of Christ from a true follower, even though old, decrepit, unread and unveneered. Poverty? Great Jehovah! What costly gems in your jewel case, painted Dame, and what gilt-edge bond in your vault, broad-clothed Sire, would purchase on 'change a tithe of such a treasure?

Meanwhile, Andy was alone in a cell. The hue and cry was at its height, and the little he heard from the outside world filled him with alarm. The Governor had said publicly that Mat's murder would be vindicated, that patience had ceased to be a virtue, that a rigid investigation would be ordered, and much more to the same effect, and as Andy had never enjoyed a very extensive acquaintance with Governors, he, of course, didn't understand that all those *public* utterances were to be construed politically. Then, too, the press—Lord bless the press!—It, or they (I don't know whether it considers itself more than one or not, but I'll say *it* for convenience), it can always be relied on to out-bray a brigade of jackasses when sensation furnishes the wind. The press said all the immensely bright and interesting things about the affair that it has always been saying, and with the never-varying result, that the Northern press called the Southern press an unmitigated chump, and the Southern press kicked up its hind legs and said, "You're another!!" and then they concluded that the best thing under the circumstances was to break Andy's neck.

Andy was very properly wrought up over such a conclusion, and despatched one of the jailors who knew of a great lawyer—so he said—who would save Andy's neck—so he said—and show the Governor, and the press, and the balance of them a trick or two—so he said. The great lawyer came—came a-running, but he stopped before he arrived at Andy's cell, and sauntered in with an air that spake:

"Now, young man, don't think I'm going to take your case. I just came to satisfy the jailer."

What he actually said, however, must have been different. Birds of a feather possess that inherent propensity of flocking together in cells or in pews, and when, an hour

later, the great lawyer shook hands familiarly with Andy, he said, jauntily:

"Keep your backbone stiff, Dodd. I'll be at Pike this evening an if I don't bring back enough of that pension money to buy a jury, they can hang *me*. The old man'll pony up—persecuted son, penitent sinner—eh? eh? What's the trump, eh? eh? Ha! ha! Dodd, it's easier to make a necktie than to tie one, eh? eh? Good-by—drink all you please, but don't eat anything—persecuted racket, eh? eh? See? Good-bye."

Thus met and parted Andy and the great lawyer. The latter was at Pike on the afternoon train, and ushered himself into the post-office. A young girl, who had kindly volunteered to attend to the few duties, was behind the counter.

"Good day, miss. Squire Dodd home?" The great lawyer with an eye to policy always used "Squire" in the rural districts.

"Yes, sir; he's lyin' down."

"Ah, yes, I understand; I see—I see; I—ah—come from young Dodd."

"Oh, do you?" she interrupted; "then he'll be glad to see you—come back."

She led the way to the little bare room that was darkened.

"Mr. Dodd," she said, softly, "here's a—a gentleman from Town; he comes from Andy."

"Raise the curtains, my dear, and place a chair," and raising himself on his elbow, he looked up at the great lawyer.

"You'll have to excuse me for not a-gittin' up, sir. Take a seat; I'm a bit poorly to-day."

"Yes, yes, my dear sir; I understand—I see—I see;

pray don't disturb yourself. My name, Squire, is Legg—John Legg, sir."

He might have added that the ropers-in and cappers about the police courts called him Jack Legg—but as it would have been irrelevant, he concluded otherwise. Old Man Dodd held out a withered, toil and time beaten hand, that looked more like a plaster cast than flesh and blood. The great lawyer shook it and laid it back tenderly on the coverlet, which was unnecessary, for, though worn and wasted, it had strength enough left for more exertion than that. But Mr. Legg was politic, as all great lawyers are, I dare say, and Mr. Legg also wished to be tender with the hand that would doubtless count him out those nice, crisp, new greenbacks. Deacon Hicks and Pedro when they planned their robbery, had given very little thought to any portion of Old Man Dodd's anatomy, but the great lawyer was not made of so stern a stuff.

"How is my boy, Mr. Legg?" asked the old man, when he had sufficiently mastered himself.

"Squire—I—ah, young Dodd is physically as well as could be expected. He is being treated kindly. I myself, sir, admonished the warden to look to him—good bed, plenty to eat, and all that—but—ah—Squire—I'm a plain, honest man, and anything but the truth on an occasion like this—ah—as, indeed, on all occasions—is repugnant to my nature. Therefore, Squire, I must tell you as a father to a father, that—ah—young Dodd is mentally upon the cross."

The old man sighed and made a movement with his hand, but said nothing. The great lawyer, who had paused diplomatically for an interruption, saw that the motion was merely towards an old dingy-looking Bible, so he proceeded:

"Yes, Squire, mentally on the cross. The State is bend-

ing every effort to make an example of him, and what can one weak boy do when hounded by a great State? Yes, Squire, mentally on the cross, and if you were only there in the City and could hear the universal condemnation of the poor boy's rash act, you would, Squire, appreciate the well-nigh desperate condition of your son. But, Squire, he will have a trial—his day in court, you know—and I will see to it, sir, that the hell hounds don't make a victim of him. It will require the strongest and most untiring energy I have ever put in any case; but, Squire, I will not sit idly down when a fair young life is about to be sacrificed, without a protest, sir, a vigorous protest." His emotion stopped him, and while he covertly peeped over the folds of his handkerchief, he noted tears welling up into the old man's eyes, and thought, "Now I'll land him."

When he again began, he so worked on the father's love, that, at last, the old man arose, and pausing a moment, said:

"Go back to him, Mr. Legg, and tell him all that can be done will be," and, raising his voice, called, "My dear, bring me paper and pen," and then said to the great lawyer, "The Sheriff has all my money in his safe; I'll write you an order. I expect Andy will be a-needin' some along, and I might as well pay you now as any time."

Mr. Legg thought, "Well, I should say," but replied: "Tut, tut, Squire, my humble fee can abide. I trust John Legg can, in a time like this, forget base money. Yes, Squire, I know he can, and I only wish others could. But —ah, me, Squire, repeated knocks and bruises in my profession has taught me otherwise. *My* fee may wait, Squire, but we will need money; public opinion, at all times unfair, is so warped now, that nothing but the—ah—sinews of war can fight it. With a sufficient sum, though, we can

say to public opinion and to the State: 'Cry and rage as you will, *we* have the jury!'"

Old Man Dodd looked down at the great lawyer vacantly for a moment, as though incapable of grasping his meaning. Then he asked slowly, and emphasizing every word:

"*Do—I—understand—you—to—mean—bribery?*"

"Well—ah—my dear sir—the great aim is young Dodd's release, and the end, you know, justifies—"

"Stop!" cried the Roman father—no longer decrepit Old Man Dodd, crushed with sorrow, but righteous wrath personified. Oh! may the day come when we can say the American father!

"Stop, sir! That is a lie, a miserable lie. *No* end will justify breaking the law. That sinful doctrine has put my boy behind the bars, and has broken the hearts of millions. Andy shall have a fair, open trial, sir, which is his right, and all that can be honorably done for him and his case, will be done if it takes my all; but I shan't spend a penny to bribe a jury. You kin take your fine ducks to another market, Mr. Legg. I'll have a lawyer to defend my boy, but I'll have an *honest* man first. *There's the door.* My dear, you needn't mind about the paper."

The Roman Father kept his word. Sick though he was, and broken down at heart, he boarded the first train to Town, and found an honest man and a lawyer combined. Something of a rarity, the wits would have you believe, but I'm proud to say, not. True, the shyster, the jack-leg, and the police court tout aboundeth thicker than fleas on a mangy hound, but they are not lawyers, and don't insult lawyers by calling them such. You don't call these fakirs who go about the country selling nostrums, doctors; you don't call these hobo sky pilots preachers; then, why in the name of common fairness do you call Mr. Jack Legg a

lawyer? Life's dictionary is as accessible as Webster's. Andy's lawyer made a hard, conscientious fight for his client. He was a man who never drummed a case or a jury, and before the solid citizens of the City his name stood untainted. His jury was of such, and he saw, step by step, that Andy got all that reason could ask. But it was hopeless from the start. Justice had sealed the perverse fate, albeit with the wax of mercy, and the Roman Father went back to his little bare room alone—calm in his integrity, but bowed down, he felt, for the last time.

Dud was his constant attendant, and all Pike came to his bedside, but he had heard the Voice calling from on high, and he set his house in order and laid open his books for the Great Settlement. One night Dud tiptoed in and beckoned the village doctor aside. He had a newspaper in his hand, and taking the doctor near a lamp showed him the following:

"Andy Dodd, the young man recently convicted of murder in the second degree and sentenced to fifteen years, made a break for liberty this morning before day, and was shot by a sentry. He died before medical assistance arrived."

The doctor shook his head and folded the paper, and Dud said, under his breath:

"Yes, let's spare him that blow. He'll know it soon enough in Heaven."

* * * * * * *

Some few weeks later a cashier of one of the City banks stepped back in the President's office and said:

"That Doyle mortgage is due soon. Foreclose?"

"Yes; they've got nothing."

Just then somebody knocked lightly on the glass door, and the cashier on opening it, beheld a square-built, smooth-shaven, rather handsome fellow, who, notwithstanding the rural simplicity of his dress, had a well-informed air, and a determined eye.

"The President in?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, sir," answered the cashier.

"This is him," put in the President."

"You have a mortgage on Mrs. Sallie Doyle's place, down in Pike?"

"We have."

"I've come to take it up."

"You come from the—ah—Mrs. Doyle?"

"As her representative."

"Your name?"

"Trenome."

"Oh—ah—are you the gentleman appointed Sheriff during the trouble down there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pleased to meet you. We have been hearing some excellent accounts up here of your fidelity—quite a deplorable tragedy that."

"Very."

"So, Mrs. Doyle desires to take up the mortgage. No hurry at all. We were just discussing it, and thought possible an extension might be agreeable to her in the light of recent events."

"It would have been but for a legacy. An old gentleman died there right recently and left her his money."

"Ah, indeed—relation?"

"No—father of the boy who murdered her son."

"Ah, *in*-deed!"

"I'm his executor. Here is his will—all legal; I want to do this unbeknownst to her."

There was some parleying and demurring over the rather unusual procedure, but when Dud set his jaws square together, and produced those nice, crisp, new greenbacks, they fascinated the President as easily as they had done Hicks, Pedro and Legg.

Dud took the mortgage to Pike and stopped in at Mother Doyle's.

"How's Betty?" he asked of Laura.

"Better, Mr. Trenome, but the doctor says her mind will never entirely recover."

"Mother Doyle well?"

"Yes—she's at the cemetery."

"Just give her these papers when she comes, and tell her it ain't any use o' sayin' she won't take Old Man Dodd's money; it ain't hers to take any more."

He put off down the walk and Laura called:

"Come and see us; I'm going to keep the school still."

"All right," he answered. "Glad you made up your mind to stay," and then, as he shut the gate and gave a parting look at her sweet face, he murmured, with a humorous smile:

"Dogged if I didn't cuss 'em once for votin 'her in; I always *was* a plum fool!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OLD STORY—EVER NEW.

It was a beautiful day around Pike. You, who have seen Dixie weather at its best, will understand that "beautiful day" means beautiful, and that even then the word is mild.

The sky wore a lustrous blue, between the tints of sapphire and turquoise, and in all the bright firmament there was not a cloud to haze the great mass of azure. Toward the westward hung the Sun, blazing in his golden splendor —supreme, magnificent. From the northeast anon came a breeze, something stronger than a zephyr, that brought with it a delightful fragrance of field and forest; and way off to the South rose gently the clear outlines of a range of hills, where the taller pine-tops could be seen nodding like so many staid old planters enjoying a Sunday evening's nap. Oh! 'twas a heavenly scene, and one to cause him who worships Nature a peace scarce known in this worrysome life. A scene which made Dud feel, as he gathered a great armful of ferns, that surely some angel was tenderly and noiselessly rolling the world to that haven whose horizon is eternal bliss.

He had been gathering ferns in the little valley where he had so often spent hours of reverie—hours that had not been always happy, but were happier there than elsewhere, because his heart had dedicated the valley to Laura. It was her shrine to him; it was there the early light of his

love dawned, and it was there that hope, immortal child of love! found birth. Its every slope and crevice, rock and rill, were sacred to him, and the most favored son of wealth could not mar its holiness, though he offered the Klondike in return.

Let the weather be ever so stormy, it never kept Dud from his regular visits to the valley; while fair days saw all his leisure hours spent in some of its more secluded glens, now reading one of dear old Mat's books, now gathering a profusion of wild flowers—flowers that She loved so well—and now, sweetest hours of all, painting on future's canvas an idyll of hope, love, and fancy. Those were halcyon days for Dud, made so by the dreams of more halcyon ones to come. And, yet, at times he thought, with a sinking of heart, what would he do if they should end in dreams—only dreams. Then he would close his eyes and refuse to contemplate it, and lo! when he opened them again, the golden bank glittered with the old light—the dark cloud had vanished ere it had well appeared, and Resolve would spring forward stronger than ever. Yes, Resolve would spring forward, and Dud would eye some wayward red bird with stern determination, and whisper through clenched teeth in a vastly melodramatic fashion, and with all that, it would go no further than the valley. The wayward red bird, on his rounds to his haunts and harems, would keep the secret, drat him! and never stop by Laura's window and whisper aught of those brave resolves; while Dud, poor fellow, would drive up to the Doyles's and, like the French general, drive back again, hie to the valley and resolve it all over anew. So it had gone on; month after month had slipped by—Dud and Laura, often accompanied by Mother Doyle and Betty, had paid loving pilgrimage to Mat's grave and decked it with the simple but

exquisite flowers and ferns which grow nowhere else with the myriad variety that they do in bonny Dixie; then, back from their sweetly solemn mission, they had sat on the broad porch, supper over, Mother Doyle wrapped in hallowed memories of the loved and lost; dear, tender Betty, softly humming the "S'wanee River," or some like air, and anon smiling through the silently growing dusk at some early star—the sound of a far-off night bird peeping out from murky den to bid adieu to day, a faint whistle away in the distance of an oncoming train, and Laura rocking softly, her eyes closed, and some favored bud or blossom nestling against her fair cheek. Then it was that Dud's resolve would mount to untold courage and verily, verily, his hands would almost seek the forbidden precincts of his Goddess, when that miserable, plotting oncoming train would give a whistle, a screech, a roar, and dash thundering by, knocking Resolve into a heap of timidness.

It was still, as it had been all along, "Miss Hennon;" and if Dud ever did speak her Christian name, it was down in the little valley where none but that wayward red bird could hear, and he, the scamp, could never take a hint and tell Laura. So there it was, thought Dud, there it was, and in a pretty bad state at that: "Miss Hennon" and "Mr. Trenome" when they met; "Miss Hennon" and "Mr. Trenome" when they parted—cordially enough, as far as it went, but how in the name of common sense could Cupid get very far with nothing but "Miss Hennon" and "Mr. Trenome" ding-donging in his ears!

If there was only somebody besides that blockhead of a red bird to help him out! But who? who?

Time was when he would have confided in Betty, and she, whole-souled champion that she was, would have braced him up for any venture and seen him through to defeat or

victory. But that time was no more, and Dud sighed bitterly as he thought of it—bitterly, but not selfishly. Far from it. Though it would have wrenched his heart a thousand-fold more than it did the day Mat declared his love for Laura, he would have willingly given up all hope of being more than her friend, to have seen the old time back—to have seen Mat successful, proud, with honest pride, of duty well done—to have seen Betty her old sweet self, happy and well, and poor Andy alive—but why go on with such thoughts. They brought no realization of anything but sorrow; they led ever to that fearful night when the hellish rage of lawlessness wreaked its fury on the noblest of the noble—Mat Doyle—and living that nightmare over again helped not its victims.

No, no; not Betty. She would help him in this, as in other things of yore, but it was cowardly to even dream of having her afflicted mind do that which he, a sane, strong man, feared to attempt.

Nor would Mother Doyle do. Dud knew that Mother Doyle had once hoped to see Laura her daughter, and though he knew, also, that now when she could no longer cherish that hope, if there was anything that would bring her happiness, it would be his and Laura's union. Yet he felt a keen sensitiveness about laying bare his heart to Mother Doyle. At times he suspected she read his heart withal, especially when she had performed some of her many little acts of kindness to them with the solicitude that none but mothers know. But his respect for her sorrow kept him silent.

Thinking these thoughts over again for the thousandth time, he at last gathered up the result of an hour's pleasant task, a big, double armful of all the different sorts of ferns in which the valley abounded. The day was the anniver-

sary of Mat's death, and they were going to make a veritable flower throne of his resting place. Dud carried the offering up to the roadside where his pony was haltered, and shortly he was astride, heading towards Pike and fairly concealed behind the ferns.

Mother Doyle and Laura were on the gallery when Dud's pony rounded a turn in the road that stretched a half mile or more straight past the Doyles'. To a superficial observer lacking a telescope, it would seem that a pony, breed or sex undiscoverable, with a huge bunch of something or other green on top of it, was making headway toward them; and as for Mother Doyle, she wasn't sure whether it was a pony or a cow.

"There comes Mr. Trenome," called Laura, in a tone suggesting that "Mr. Trenome" was the very last person in the world she expected to see coming.

"Who—Dudley?" queried Mother Doyle, shading her eyes. She had never failed to ask that when Laura spoke of "Mr. Trenome"—because Mother Doyle had never called him anything else but Dudley all his life.

"Who—Dudley? Why, Laura, I can't make him out; you mean way down yonder?"

"Yes, ma'am; don't you see? Why, I can see him plain as day—wave to him, mother, he's waving at us." So it was evident that Dud could see as plain as day, too.

"I give it up, Laura—your eyesight is better than mine," remarked Mother Doyle, still shading her eyes and looking with all her might.

"*Is* it?" Laura asked, innocently, and then she blushed ever so red. There isn't the slightest doubt but what Dud saw that blush, for his pony quickened her pace dreadfully.

"Well, mother," continued Laura, hastily (she always

called her mother now), I didn't really *see* him at first, but you know we all were expecting him to-day, and when I saw the big bunch of ferns—that is, I mean bunch of—" and she stopped and blushed ever so red again, for how in the world could she tell that they were ferns and not see *him*. But nobody saw her blush—Mother Doyle was still looking with all her might, and the fast nearing horseman was completely hid behind those ferns—no doubt.

"Whoa—ho!" he sang out, reining up at last and calling to all: Betty had come out by this time and was on her way down the walk, for she always took the pony around the lane.

"Howd'y everybody—hello, Betty, how goes it?"

"Fine, Dud, fine, and here's my pony, bless her heart!" She opened the gate and clapped her hands gleefully, and then vaulted into the saddle and cantered merrily around to the lot. Dud watched her as he started for the house and thought, "Poor girl—maybe it's better so; she knows no care now, and if Andy had married her, ah, me—" But it was no time to show sadness on his face or harbor it in his bosom. There, waiting on the steps to meet him, were Mother Doyle and She whose presence was to happiness what the Sun's rays are to life.

They shook hands. Dud said "Howd'y, Miss Hennon," mighty warmly, while Laura responded, "Glad to see you, Mr. Trenome," mighty cordially, and it was but a few minutes before Betty joined them with a basket of honeysuckles, roses and lilies. They started for the cemetery, walking leisurely and chatting—Betty with Mother Doyle, and Laura and Dud together—though Betty would frequently drop back a pace to show them some especially pretty flower in her collection. When they arrived at the quiet spot in the village burying ground where stood Mat's

simple headstone, Betty placed the basket by the mound and, kneeling down, laid her head on the stone for a moment, while the rest stood silent, and a tiny bird that had fluttered to a nearby bough, stayed the piping notes that welled in its breast. Oh, Death! we stand 'neath the shade of the tree that protecteth our loved one's grave, and even though the thorn hath long since been taken from the wound and Gilead's balm hath healed its bleeding, the tear will start and waken all those joys and hopes so fond and so long gone. The heartstrings of a sorrowed life will answer mellowed grief's soft touch, and sound to memory's ear a plaintive chord of dust to dust. How sweet, how strengthening, how grand the thought, when we can face the marble slab whereon is marked that loved one's name and whisper "Grave, where is thy victory?" All, all must go—"farewell" must ever be the last cry of the loving soul, but how soothed will be the parting when we feel that the Great Master awaiteth beyond the Unknown Deep with a welcome of "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Such was the epitaph on Mat's tombstone, deserved, yea, deserved and earned with a life of rectitude. The world never appreciates such lives until it has driven them into eternity—then it prates platitudes with noisy gusto. I never hear a vapid, senseless eulogy on some noble man or woman long since hounded to death, that I don't think of the scriptural assassin, who asked "Art thou in health, my brother?" and stabbed his brother to death. But enough! Poor Mat is dead—dead for a principle, and all the mobs from Hell to Halifax can't kill that principle. When they do, the aurora borealis will have been snuffed in the waters of Lethe, primeval chaos will reign supreme, and the Judgment Day will have become ancient history. Were mankind to discard the principle that *law is a rule of action*, the

hyena's ghoulish feast would be as the repast of a chaste divinity beside the brutishness that would ensue. But again enough! Mankind won't commit universal suicide, rapists nor mobs to the contrary notwithstanding.

Betty lifted up her head and the rest began handing her flowers and ferns, while she placed them over the mound in beautiful clusters; a bunch of pure white lilies at the head, surrounded by honeysuckles—in the middle a cross of red and pink roses resting in a mass of ferns, and at the foot one large lily with only a background of green turf. They were silent, all save Betty; she smiled throughout and murmured little words of endearment that she had so often used towards Mat, and when, at last, the lone lily was tenderly laid in place, she patted the grass around it, and looking up at Mother Doyle, said cheerily: "Oh! mother, won't our own precious Mat be ever so happy when he wakes and sees all the lovely flowers we've brought!"

"Yes, Betty," tremulously responded Mother Doyle, taking her daughter's hand and leading her gently from the enclosure, "dear Matthew will be happy and we must be happy, too."

"Oh! I *am* happy, mother, so happy," she cried, with her eyes uplifted, "so happy to know I have such a sweet, pure brother waiting for us up there."

Dud and Laura looked affectionately after them—watched them in silence, saw them pass out the gate, heard the tiny bird nearby pour out its tiny psalm of gladness, felt the eventide breeze from the pine-clad hills—and then? Then they were happy, too!

They knelt, hand in hand, beside that lowly grave and prayed the blessing of him they loved, and so praying, thanked God for his life, his example to lead them on and

upwards to the heights we must climb. They arose. The story was told—the oldest, sweetest story, ever new.

* * * * * * *

And now they pass out, arm in arm, heart in heart, soul in soul, and I watch them even as they watched the others, and Dixie's glorious Sun pours a flood of sinking light along the pathway of our friends.

The world is left to me, but not to darkness, for while their forms are fading in the distance, the moon comes slowly o'er the trees and sheds a sheen of silvery bliss on Cupid's conquest, and in that twilight blending of rays and beams, I see a vision—nay, not a vision, but a reality, growing clear and clearer on the plate of future.

The Trenome farm looks golden in its mass of grain, the pigeons circle 'round the loft and coo their old-time courtships o'er again, the drowsy medley of a barn-yard crew pays tribute to contentment, and oh! bonniest sound of all, I hear the prattle of a baby's voice, like some soft strain from an angel's harp, and dear Betty holds the little rascal up while Laura calls out in the yard where Mother Doyle is picking flowers, "Mother, what *do* you think? Guess! Little Mat's got *three* teeth; won't Dud laugh!"

FINIS.

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